CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

SUNDAY ▸ DECEMBER 28, 2025 ▸ VOL: 11 ▸ ISSUE: 163 ▸ PAGES 12 ▸ ₹2.00

IBC WORLD NEWS
CH ABC
Certified English Daily

Trump plans talks with Putin before meeting Zelenskyy P8

DMart Expands Stores Amid Digital Competition P9

P12 Wamiqa Gabbi Says Cinema Embraces Subtle Storytelling Now

www.ibcworldnews.com | BENGALURU ▸ HUBBALLI ▸ MANGALURU ▸ MYSURU ▸ KALABURAGI | cityhilights.news@gmail.com

‘Bulldozer justice’ different from clearing illegal land grab: CM

Siddaramaiah said clearing illegal encroachments differs from ‘bulldozer justice’, responding to Kerala CM’s criticism

BENGALURU

Responding to Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan’s criticism over the demolition of houses in Bengaluru’s Faqir Colony and Waseem Layout, Karnataka Chief Minister on Saturday said that there is a difference between ‘bulldozer justice’ and clearing illegal encroachments.

In a post shared on X, the Chief Minister explained that several unauthorised structures had been built on a solid waste dumping site, rendering the area unsafe for habitation. Despite repeated notices, many families failed to vacate, prompting authorities to carry out the eviction. Siddaramaiah emphasised that the action was aimed solely at clearing unsafe and encroached land, and should not be conflated with arbitrary ‘bulldozer raj.’

He added that the Greater Bengaluru Commissioner had been instructed to provide temporary shelter, meals, and other humanitarian support for the displaced families. Noting that most of the residents were migrant workers rather than locals, Siddaramaiah stressed that the government remains committed to humane rehabilitation and adequate housing for those affected.

Highlighting the necessity of the operation to protect public land and ensure safety standards, the Chief Minister insisted that political criticism without knowledge of facts misleads the public. He reaffirmed that the state government’s approach seeks to balance strict law enforcement with compassion for vulnerable populations, ensuring both public safety and the welfare of displaced residents.

The incident stems from a BSWML eviction drive in Yelahanka on December 20, which reportedly displaced nearly 400 families. Officials said the houses stood on encroached government land, while residents alleged they were evicted without proper notice and left to spend nights in the open despite decades of residence.

> **We are trying to protect public land and public space. I request Pinarayi not to interfere without knowing the facts. We are not into bulldozers.**
> —D.K. Shivakumar, Deputy CM

Pinarayi's statement..

Earlier, Pinarayi Vijayan had accused the Karnataka government of mirroring the BJP’s “bulldozer politics,” claiming the demolitions in predominantly Muslim neighbourhoods violated constitutional values and human dignity. A post on X read, “The bulldozing of Faqir Colony and Waseem Layout in Bengaluru, uprooting Muslim families who have lived there for years, exposes the brutal normalisation of “bulldozer raj”. “All secular and democratic forces must rally together to resist and defeat this insidious trend,” added the statement.

Cong to launch ‘MGNREGA Bachao Abhiyan’ from Jan 5

NEW DELHI

Vowing to protect UPA-era rural job guarantee law, Congress on Saturday announced a nation-wide 'MGNREGA Bachao Abhiyan' (Save MGNREGA programme) from January 5 next year, claiming the BJP government will have to face people's anger as the new law is aimed at taking money away from the poor and hand it to industrialists like Gautam Adani.

Senior Congress leaders convened on Saturday at an extended session of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) to evaluate the political landscape ahead of crucial multi-state Assembly elections next year.

A key agenda item was the replacement of MGNREGA with the Viksit Bharat–Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika

Mission (Gramin) Act (VB-G RAM G), passed in Parliament and approved by President Droupadi Murmu. Kharge described the repeal as a “one-sided decision” imposing a 60:40 funding burden on states and said public anger was mounting.

Announcing the initiative, Kharge pledged a nationwide campaign to safeguard workers’ rights, preserve Mahatma Gandhi’s legacy, and promote the slogans “Jai Samvidhan” and “Jai Hind.” He cited precedents such as the 2015 land acquisition law amendments and the 2020-21 farm law protests to highlight the impact of public mobilisation.

The meeting was attended by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi, Lok Sabha Opposition Leader Rahul Gandhi, Shashi Tharoor, chief ministers of Congress-ruled states including Karnataka, Telangana, and Himachal Pradesh and others.

> **The Modi government has scrapped MGNREGA, rendering crores of poor and vulnerable people helpless. After kicking the poor in the stomach, the Modi government has stabbed them in the back.**
> —Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress president

> **It is a devastating attack on the states, on poor people of this country, and it is carried out by the Prime Minister single-handedly, much like demonetisation was.**
> —Rahul Gandhi, Congress leader

> **The Central government has replaced MGNREGA with ‘VB-G RAM G’. To oppose this, we will launch a nationwide MGNREGA Bachao movement from January 5.**
> —Siddaramaiah, Karnataka CM

‘US-backed strikes hit ISIS-linked camps in Nigeria’

WASHINGTON DC

U.S.-supported airstrikes have destroyed two Islamic State–linked camps in Nigeria’s Sokoto State, the Nigerian government announced. The operation, conducted on Thursday in the Bauni forest, targeted foreign ISIS fighters believed to be infiltrating the country from the Sahel region. Officials said the strikes followed detailed intelligence gathering, surveillance, and planning, and were authorized by President Bola Tinubu.

According to the government, the operation was launched from maritime platforms in the Gulf of Guinea using MQ-9 Reaper drones, which released 16 precision-guided munitions. The statement added that the targeted camps were allegedly being used by foreign militants collaborating with local extremists to prepare major attacks inside Nigeria. Authorities noted that no civilian casualties were reported, although some debris fell in nearby communities in Sokoto and Kwara states.

Unnao rape survivor seeks FIR against fmr IO

NEW DELHI

The survivor of the 2017 Unnao rape case, in which former BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar was convicted, has approached the CBI demanding registration of an FIR against the then investigating officer, alleging that he acted in collusion with Sengar. In her complaint, she claimed the officer conducted a biased and dishonest probe intended to benefit the accused, manipulating facts and introducing deliberate lapses to weaken the case.

She alleged that forged school records were used in the chargesheet to falsely show she was enrolled in a government school with a different date of birth, although she had never studied there. The complaint also said the officer wrongly recorded that she used another woman’s mobile phone and attributed fabricated statements to her.

The survivor said she had earlier lodged a complaint against the officer but no action followed. Citing the trial court observations that questioned the manner in which her statements were recorded, she reiterated that the officer appeared to be “hand in glove” with the accused.

Her plea comes amid growing concern after the Delhi High Court recently granted conditional bail to Sengar, though he remains jailed in another related case. The survivor also claimed continuing threats to her and her family.

Delhi Police on Saturday detained activist Yogita Bhayana, Congress leader Mumtaz Patel and several other protesters who were staging a sit-in near the Parliament complex to oppose the suspension of the life sentence of Unnao rape convict Kuldeep Singh Sengar, an official said.

DCM inaugurates Basavanagudi ‘Avarebele Mela’

BENGALURU

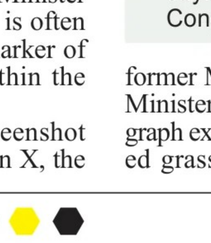
The 26th edition of the Basavanagudi Avarebele (hyacinth bean) Mela was inaugurated by Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, promising a grand celebration of Karnataka’s culture, cuisine, and agricultural heritage. Organized by Vasavi Condiments, who started the mela in 2000, the event is held at the National College grounds in Basavanagudi and will continue until January 4, 2026. Shivakumar highlighted the cultural significance of avarekai, often grown alongside ragi and jowar, calling it “everyone’s favourite food” and urging citizens to visit the mela while providing a platform for farmers to showcase their produce.This year’s mela features unique attractions including a 360-degree 5D theater, amusement zones, tattoo and face-painting stalls, nail art, and family-friendly activities.

More on page 3

BJP workers want party in power on own strength: B.Y. Vijayendra

BENGALURU

BJP state president B.Y. Vijayendra clarified that his recent statement that the BJP should return to power on its own strength reflects the genuine expectations of party workers. Speaking in Bengaluru, he said that in several past elections the party narrowly missed a clear majority by just 5–10 seats, which has remained a concern among cadres. The desire of BJP workers is to see the party form a stable government independently in Karnataka, he added. Vijayendra highlighted that the BJP performed strongly in the recently held local body elections, securing majority support in many areas. As party president, he said it was his responsibility to voice the aspirations of workers and give them the right message at the right time.

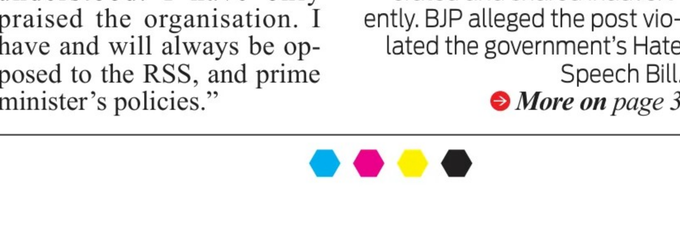


His remarks, he insisted, should not be seen as creating confusion within the alliance. Responding to former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda’s comment that there would be no alliance in local body polls, Vijayendra said the BJP holds respect for Gowda, calling him an experienced statesman. He emphasized that both Deve Gowda and B.S. Yediyurappa earned their stature through struggle, and that the JD(S) is part of the NDA to strengthen Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s leadership. Vijayendra added that the party will listen to senior leaders and ultimately follow whatever decision the BJP high command takes regarding alliances. He urged that Deve Gowda’s remarks should not be misinterpreted, assuring that the BJP remains committed to collective decisions and disciplined cooperation.

Power tussle: GP supporters protest outside Cong HQ

NEW DELHI

Supporters of Karnataka Home Minister and Congress leader G Parameshwara gathered near Indira Bhawan in Delhi on Saturday, demanding his appointment as the next Chief Minister of Karnataka. Advocates of Parameshwara highlighted his strong backing within the Congress party and his efforts to consolidate SC/ST support, urging the leadership to choose a Dalit leader for the top post.


Jai Bheem Jai Samvidhan
BABA SAHEB DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR DALITHA SEVA SAMITHI
"Justice • Dignity • Equal Opportunity" "Representation Matters"
"Democracy Through Equality"
DEMAND FOR DALIT CHIEF MINISTER IN KARNATAKA

“We have come from Karnataka to Delhi to demand a Dalit CM. If Siddaramaiah is ever replaced, it should be G Parameshwara,” one supporter said. Another remarked, “I am from Tumkur. We want G Parameshwara as CM... a Dalit leader deserves this opportunity.”

However, the path to the Chief Minister’s seat remains complicated. Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar is also a contender, reportedly influencing the party high command. The protests reflect the ongoing internal dynamics within the Karnataka Congress, where multiple leaders are vying for power as the government reaches its halfway mark.

Key figures in the leadership debate include Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy CM Shivakumar, and Home Minister Parameshwara.

ORGANISATIONAL PRAISE UPROAR

Digvijaya Singh’s praise for BJP-RSS sparks political storm

NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader and Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh has stirred controversy by publicly lauding the organisational strength of the BJP and its ideological mentor, the RSS, just a week after urging Rahul Gandhi to implement internal reforms within the Congress.

On Saturday morning, Singh shared a black-and-white photograph, believed to be from the 1990s, showing a young Narendra Modi seated on the floor beside BJP veteran L.K. Advani at a public event in Gujarat. The image, reportedly from the 1996 swearing-in of former Gujarat Chief Minister Shankersinh Vaghela, is often cited as a symbolic marker of Modi’s early rise within the party.

Accompanying a screenshot sourced from Quora on X, the former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister noted that the photograph exemplified how dedicated grassroots workers in the RSS and BJP can ascend through the ranks to hold the highest constitutional offices. “This is the power of the organisation,” Singh wrote, concluding his post with “Jai Siya Ram.”

Within Congress, Singh’s post is being widely interpreted as a signal to the party leadership. By tagging the official Congress account along with party president Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi, and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, he appears to be reinforcing his earlier call for organisational reform.

Responding to the controversy, Singh said “You have misunderstood. I have only praised the organisation. I have and will always be opposed to the RSS, and prime minister’s policies.”

BJP Reacts

- BJP spokesperson CR Kesavan said Singh’s post had dropped a “truth bomb” exposing what he alleged was the Congress’s “autocratic and undemocratic” internal functioning.“Will Rahul Gandhi show courage and react to this shocking truth bomb?” Kesavan asked in a post on X.
- Another BJP spokesperson, Pradip Bhandari, described Singh’s post as evidence of open dissent, saying, “Congress vs Congress is on display.”
- BJP national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi alleged that the praise was an “open dissent” against Rahul Gandhi’s leadership in the party.

QUICK READ

BJP demands apology from Priyank Kharge

BENGALURU: Karnataka BJP on Friday slammed IT Minister Priyank Kharge for sharing a “malicious AI-generated image” targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and misleading the public about a court order related to the 2017 Unnao rape case. The party also accused him of mocking the ‘Beti Bachao Beti Padhao’ scheme and demanded an unconditional apology. Kharge later deleted the post, stating the image may have been AI-generated and shared inadvertently. BJP alleged the post violated the government’s Hate Speech Bill.

More on page 3

Thailand and Cambodia agree to second ceasefire

BANGKOK: Thailand and Cambodia have halted weeks of intense border fighting with a second ceasefire, marking the worst conflict between the neighbours in years. The truce, which took effect at noon local time (0500 GMT), is reportedly holding, with Thailand confirming no fresh gunfire since its implementation. The agreement, signed by Thai Defence Minister Natthaphon Narkphanit and Cambodian Defence Minister Tea Seiha, ended 20 days of heavy clashes that killed at least 101 people and displaced over half a million.

Why encourage anti-Kannadas? 'Mukya Mantri' Chandru questions

MYSURU

The titles of many recent Kannada films are not in Kannada. Why should such anti-Kannada elements be encouraged? questioned veteran theatre and film actor 'Mukya Mantri' Chandru.

Speaking after receiving the Sri Krishna Alanhalli State-level Award along with senior journalist Anshi Prasanna Kumar at the Karnataka Rajyotsava and Mane-Mane Kavigoshti programme organised by the Janapara Sahitya Parishat here, he said film titles now carry names such as Devil, Mark, and 45. Actors should fight for the land and language of Kannada. They should ensure that name boards are in Kannada. They must earn the love and trust of the people. For this, they should take Dr Rajkumar as a role model. Conduct is important; earning money alone is not. Actors should live with everyone in friendship and harmony. Likewise, Kannada films should not be released by directly competing with each other. If this is avoided, Kannada films will run for longer periods.

Chandru said the Kannada film industry is small. In such a situation, all films should succeed. However, internal competition among Kannada films weakens the industry. One must also be cautious about films from other languages. In this context, actor Sudeep, who speaks of commitment and being battle-ready, should have directly declared a war against piracy, he added.

Sharaotsava celebrated at JC PU College

MYSURU

Sri Jayachamarajendra PU College celebrated its Annual Day "Sharadotsava" on 27.12.2025 at Kalamandira, Mysuru. Amarnath K K, Senior Civil Judge and Member Secretary, District Legal Services Authority, Mysuru District was the Chief Guest, He honored the Prize winners. Addressing the gathering, he reminded of their fundamental duties, including to develop a scientific temper, humanism and a spirit of inquiry, as outlined in the Indian Constitution. Later Students performed the Glory of Karnataka, Yaksha Gaana, Dollu Kunitha, Kodava Dance, they performed many other dances on nation Integration in promoting unity and culture awareness among the audience.

Toppers of 2024-25 were felicitated on this occasion. N Sachidananda Murthy, Chairman, R Anand, Secretary, M A Jayashree, Trustee, Principal Sagar Chakravarthy C, Vice Principal Harsha B, Staff, Students and Parents graced the occasion.

Winners of the golf league with the winning trophy

MYSURU

Following are the winners of the Mysore Golf League - 2025 Season – 2 which was held on various dates at Jayachamarajendra Wadiyar Golf Course in Mysuru.

The finals was played between between defending Champion Mysore Warriors & Walkmate Ace's. However, Walkmate Ace's Wins over Mysore Warriors 4-1 lead in the finals. Standing Back Row from Left to Right : Bastin Joseph (Managing Director of Walkmate & Owner of Walkmate Ace's - Blue T-shirt Lifting the trophy)

Standing Front Row from Left to Right : Dr. Abraham Thomas (Co-Owner - Walkmate),. P Ramesh, Sonam Chugh (Captain Walkmate Ace's Team), Rear. Admiral. Ravi Gaikwad, Dr. H C Lokesh Chandra, Anek Chugh, M Sudheer, M Chirayu, R Vinay Kumar, Wg. Cdr. Dhananjay, H S Arun Kumar & C H Hrishikesh.

Ban the sale of gas filled balloons near Mysuru Palace

MYSURU

Former member of Mysuru City Corporation and President of Aniketana Trust has said that the explosion incident involving a helium cylinder used to fill balloons in front of the Ambavilas Palace, a historic tourist landmark of Mysuru city, is extremely serious. The State government must immediately ban the use of such explosive materials in public places and tourist spots.

In a press release here on Saturday, he said Mysuru city is a favorite destination for tourists. Especially to see the Ambavilas Palace, lakhs of people arrive from across the country and abroad. It is ironic that such a tragedy occurred right in front of the palace. At the year-end, the number of visitors to the Mysuru Palace increases significantly. Along with this, the Magi Festival is also being held within the palace premises. At such a time, this kind of mishap has occurred. This was unexpected, and no one is being blamed for it. However, there is a need to exercise caution to prevent such incidents in the future. In this regard, the state government must take urgent notice and ban the use of such explosive materials in public places and tourist destinations.

Increase inspections at tourist spots

Mallesh said there is an urgent need to conduct more frequent inspections at tourist places in the city and immediately ban the use of explosive materials at business locations. If priority is not given to the safety of tourists, there is a fear that the number of tourists visiting the city may decline. A safety policy should be formulated for unorganized and street-side vendors, and awareness should be created among them. In this matter, the local administration, city corporation, and district administration must take urgent steps. As the city grows, the number of vendors in the unorganized sector is increasing day by day. Separate zones should be created for such vendors. The local administration should take responsibility for registering vendors who come to the city from distant towns and other states, and for allotting them designated places. In this regard, the city corporation should take urgent action to create dedicated vendor zones for the unorganized sector, ensuring their protection while also safeguarding tourists and the general public.

From the city's security perspective, organizations, institutions, and the public should also join hands with the administration. Along with providing appropriate information, they should cooperate in maintaining the city's security.

Salt & Sugar Labelling Boards must in State Schools: Neurologist

MYSURU

A renowned neurologist Dr. Sushruta Gowda has demanded that the State government must make it mandatory for all its schools to display salt and sugar labelling boards as on the lines of CBSE schools.

Addressing a news conference here, he wanted this new system be implemented immediately in schools across Karnataka as well. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has made it mandatory for all its schools to display Salt & Sugar Labelling boards. Through these boards, children are being informed about the sugar and salt content and quantities present in the snacks and beverages they consume.

Dr Gowda said that excessive consumption of salt and sugar is causing various health problems among children. Foods with high salt and sugar content, which children consume beyond required limits, can lead to long-term health issues. In this context, the Central Government's new policy is extremely timely and welcome.

He said according to certain studies, junk food consumption has adversely affected the blood pressure of nearly 35 per cent of children. The primary reason for this is the high salt content in such foods. Studies also show that hypertension among Indian youth has doubled during the period from 2000 to 2020. In this backdrop the State Government must take immediate action. "Salt and sugar labelling boards are not very expensive. Teaching children about healthy eating habits should become part of the curriculum. Otherwise, our future generation may become unhealthy," he warned.

"Ensure only Kannada and English are used on name boards"

MYSURU

Members of various Pro-Kannada organisations that demanded that no language other than Kannada and English be used on all name boards within the Mysuru City Corporation limits, and that existing boards in other languages be replaced.

Addressing a news conference here, Lokesh Gowda, State President, S. K. Rajugowda, Mysuru District President, Muddegowda, City President, and M. B. Nagannagowda, State Spokesperson of, Karunada Sevakara Sangha said as per the Act of the Karnataka Government, Kannada is the primary and official language of Karnataka. On government name boards, usage of Kannada up to 70 percent and English up to 30 percent is permitted. No language other than Kannada and English is allowed on government signboards. Despite this, in some areas inhabited by minorities, Urdu language are seen on name boards, installed by certain narrow-minded miscreants. This is unacceptable and is an act against the sovereignty of the Kannada language.

They said their organizations — Karunada Sevakaru, Karnataka Rakshana Vedike, and other pro-Kannada organizations — have been continuously fighting against attempts to ride roughshod over the Kannada language. Recently, near the Dandu Maramma Temple at Subhash Nagar on the Mysuru–Bengaluru Road, they noticed that a name board installed by the Mysuru City Corporation for "Aziz Sait Circle" in Urdu. When they attempted to erase the said board by applying in, some miscreants came to the spot and attempted to assault them. The timely arrival of the city police prevented it. The Mysuru City Corporation Commissioner and the Mysuru City Police Commissioner must educate such hooligans about the laws of the Karnataka Government and to strictly warn them against using any language other than Kannada and English on government signboards.

NEW YEAR CALENDAR DISTRIBUTE

Mysuru The new calendar for the year 2026 was distributed to the newspaper distributors' group of Vontikoppal by Yashas Ramesh, founder of Spine Atlas Publications. On the occasion, the head of the distributors' association and other members were present along with the founder.

Yaduveer Wadiyar Honors Vajpayee, Sports Push

Mysuru-Kodagu MP Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar giving away prizes to the winners of the various competition organized in Mysuru in response to the call given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to hold MP Khel Mahotsav in each Lok Sabha constituency across the country.

MYSURU

Mysuru-Kodagu Lok Sabha member Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar participated in the valedictory of the Sansad Khel Mahotsav held at Central Institute of Indian Languages auditorium in Mysuru.

The athletes and audience were made to to listen to Prime Minster Narendra Modi's inspiring message about India's bright future in sports.

The MP also distributed the prizes to winners of the various competitions held as part of MP Khel Utsav in both Mysuru and Kodagu districts. The event truly marked a significant step forward in India's journey towards sporting excellence.

On this occasion, the MP also gave rich tributes to late Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his 101st birth anniversary and said his leadership continues to inspire them to strive towards building a stronger, more united India.

Another Name for Humanity and Concern for Students is Prof Anita Braggs

MYSURU

Humanity and concern for students are synonymous with Prof. Anita Vimala Braggs, said Dr. C. D. Parashurama, Professor in the Kannada Department of Yuvaraja College.

Speaking at the farewell function organised by the alumni at the college auditorium in honour of Prof. Anita Vimala Braggs, who is retiring at the end of this month from her post as Principal of Fine Arts College, University of Mysore here, he said Prof. Anita served the University for 38 years, of which 35 years were spent at Maharaja College. She served as Principal for three years. During that period, he was the warden of the Maharaja Hostel. Prof. Anita ensured all necessary facilities for the 552 hostel students.

These included a library with books required for preparing for competitive examinations, a meditation centre to help students stay on the right path, and the practice of community dining that included everyone—from D Group employees to all others. Similarly, as a professor, she taught English excellently. For students who felt English was a "hard nut to crack," she would sit with them after class during her free time and teach them patiently, he recalled.

Former Principal of Maharaja College, Prof. Sarvamangala Bai, who inaugurated the programme, said that Prof. Anita discharged her duties with efficiency and integrity. Earlier, there existed a strong bond between teachers and students. Creating such an atmosphere lies in the hands of teachers themselves. Though Anita is retiring from service, she is not retiring from her passion. This is another phase of life.

Delivering the felicitation address, Prof. H. R. Chetana, Head of the Folklore Department, Maharaja College, said that Prof. Anita is a personality who carried out her profession with great responsibility without expecting any return. Her concern for teachers and students, honesty, and sense of equality are her most striking qualities.

Accepting the honour, Prof. Anita Vimala Braggs said emotionally that the State government has implemented various welfare schemes, but she has been blessed with the love of students, colleagues, and family.

"My 38 years of service have given me happiness and satisfaction. Wherever I go, students meet me and speak with great affection and respect. During my tenure, I ensured that no courses were discontinued".

Presiding over the programme, retired Professor of Sociology, Maharaja College, H. M. Vasanthamma, said that Prof. Anita taught excellently and illuminated the lives of students. She worked for the all-round development of students.

Prof. Anita's husband Nestor D'Souza and senior journalist Anshi Prasanna Kumar were the chief guests. Syndicate member Kyathanahalli C. Nagaraju was a special invitee. Sridevi, Latha K. Biddappa, Indiramma, Timmarayappa, Rachaiah, B. K. Gnanaprakash, S. Krishnappa, R. Ningraju, Ningraju Halebidu, Librarian Dr. Somashekar, Basavaraju Kuraburu, J. Hemanth, Sabitha, Prajwal, Synthi, Mahesh, Bhavya, and others were present.

Fatal Attack on Forest Staffer Raises Alarm Among Villagers

MYSURU / CHAMARAJA NAGAR / HUNSUR

The growing menace of tiger attacks in the Bandipur–Hanagodu forest belt has triggered fear, anger and grief, following the death of a forest department watcher and the killing of livestock, culminating in a road blockade by furious villagers demanding immediate action and compensation.

In a tragic incident, Sanna Haida around 50 years, an Elephant Proof Trench watcher with the forest department, was killed in a tiger attack on Saturday 27 at around 12.30 pm while on duty in the Bandipur forest range of Gundlupete taluk.

A native of Nerale Koppalu Haadi in Hunsur taluk, Mysuru district, Sanna Haida is survived by his wife Akkamma and six children. After the attack, the body was taken to the Gundlupet Public Hospital for post-mortem, but owing to the absence of a doctor, it was shifted to the Chamarajanagar District Hospital.

Forest department officials, along with members of the Adivasi Budakattu community, including taluk representatives Puttamma and Nagamma Mangala, Rajendra Madduru, farmers' union activist Prabhu, and G.K. Kunnaholiya, district convener, were present at the spot.

People hit streets

Meanwhile, tiger attacks on livestock continued unabated in the Hanagodu–Gurupura region, intensifying public outrage. On Friday afternoon, a highly valuable cow l belonging to Munna of Halevaranchi village was killed by a tiger near Gurupura lake, where cattle had been tethered for grazing. Munna's son Mohammed Fayaz narrowly escaped the attack as he had gone to a nearby mosque for Friday prayers.

This incident, coupled with the killing of another cow near the Tibet camp four days earlier, pushed villagers of Halevaranchi and Gurupura to the brink. Fearing that human lives could be next, hundreds of villagers staged a sudden road blockade on the Hunsur–H.D. Kote main road, placing the carcass of the killed bull on a tractor across the highway. Traffic came to a standstill for over half an hour, with hundreds of vehicles stranded on both sides.

Villagers accused the forest department of failing to curb tiger movement, capture problem animals, and delay in paying compensation. Despite efforts by Inspector Muniyappa, SI Radha, and police personnel to disperse the crowd, protesters refused to withdraw until forest officials arrived, raising slogans against the department.

Later, RFO Nandakumar, DRFO Mallikarjun, and staff from the territorial forest division reached the spot and assured villagers that compensation would be released immediately and that combing operations would begin forthwith. Following the assurance, the protest was called off and traffic restored.

Minister condoles death

Reacting to the forest watcher's death, Forest, Ecology and Environment Minister Eshwar B. Khandre expressed deep condolences, stating that the government stands with the bereaved family. Emphasising that every life is precious, he assured financial compensation as per norms and directed forest staff to exercise utmost caution and vigilance during patrols.

The incidents have once again highlighted the urgent need for effective wildlife conflict management in fringe forest areas.

"He Came With Balloons, Returned as dead body"

SHYAM SUNDAR VATTAM, MYSURU

The mortal remains of Saleem, a balloon vendor who died in Helium gas cylinder blast in front of Mysuru Palace on Thursday, are shifted to Uttar Pradesh in an ambulance. The body was kept in the KR Hospital morgue and handed over to relatives after the medical procedures.

Saleem was only 40. Like thousands of migrant workers who move from place to place in search of a few extra rupees, he came to Mysuru with a simple dream — to sell helium-filled balloons, earn a modest amount, and return home to support his family. There were no grand ambitions, only the hope of putting a smile on the faces waiting for him back in his home district.

For days, everything went as planned. The ten-day flower show at the Mysore Palace, combined with cultural programmes and festive crowds, promised good business. Saleem blended into the sea of vendors who survive on such occasions. But fate had something unimaginably cruel in store.

At around 8.30 pm on December 25 — Christmas Day — joy turned into horror. Near the Jayamarthanda Gate of the historic Mysore Palace, where thousands had gathered to soak in the festive spirit, the helium gas cylinder used to fill balloons suddenly exploded. In a fraction of a second, Saleem's life was violently snatched away.

Before he could comprehend what was happening, the blast tore his body apart. Pieces of his mortal remains were scattered across the blast site, bearing chilling testimony to the intensity of the explosion. Amid screams, panic and chaos, Saleem died on the spot — unnoticed in life, unforgettable in death.

Back home, his family was waiting for his return, expecting a small sum of hard-earned money and stories of a successful trip. Instead, they received the devastating news of his death. Poverty added another layer of pain. The family reportedly could not even afford to travel to Mysuru to claim his mortal remains. Saleem's body was finally transported to Uttar Pradesh in an ambulance for the last rites — a lonely final journey far removed from the festive crowd where he took his last breath.

The tragedy did not end with him. Two women — Manjula from Nanjangud and Lakshmi from Bengaluru — who sustained grievous injuries in the blast, succumbed a day later while undergoing treatment at two different private hospitals. Their bodies, too, were sent back to their respective hometowns for cremation. Four to five others continue to battle injuries in hospitals, carrying scars that may never fully heal.

In one cruel instant, the blast wiped out three lives and ripped apart three families. For the city, the incident may slowly fade into memory. But for the families who lost their loved ones, the pain will remain eternal. And for Mysuru, the deaths caused by the gas cylinder blast will linger as a haunting reminder of how fragile life truly is — especially for those who live on the margins, chasing survival one balloon at a time.

Bengaluru Homemaker Loses Life in Mysuru Blast

MYSURU

A single minute earlier could have saved the life of Lakshmi, a homemaker from Bengaluru, who died after sustaining grievous injuries in a helium gas cylinder blast near the majestic Mysuru Palace on Thursday evening.

Lakshmi had come to Mysuru on a one-day trip along with her daughter and sister-in-law. After visiting the Dasara Exhibition, the trio was about to board a bus back to Bengaluru. Fate, however, intervened cruelly before they could begin their return journey. A sudden explosion caused by a helium gas cylinder used by a balloon vendor shattered the calm near the palace premises.

Within moments, the entire situation changed dramatically. The balloon vendor died on the spot due to the impact of the blast, while Lakshmi and another woman from Nanjangud suffered severe injuries. Lakshmi's daughter and sister-in-law also sustained injuries, but not as serious as hers.

Lakshmi was immediately shifted to JSS Hospital for treatment, while her daughter and sister-in-law were admitted to KR Hospital. On receiving the information, Lakshmi's relatives rushed to Mysuru, clinging to hope. She was breathing, and that faint sign of life gave them confidence that she would survive and return home safely.

But fate had decided otherwise. Lakshmi succumbed to her injuries on Friday night. The heartbreaking news was not immediately conveyed to her daughter. On Saturday morning, she was taken to the mortuary at KR Hospital to see her mother for the last time—a moment that left the family shattered beyond words. Had Lakshmi boarded the bus a minute earlier, just after visiting the exhibition, she would have escaped death. Instead, the blast ripped apart a family forever. Lakshmi's husband, an autorickshaw driver residing at Kamakshipalya in Bengaluru, is now left to cope with an irreparable loss.

2026 calendar on Wildlife released in City

Noted wildlife activists and photographers, Krupakar and Senani releasing a calendar brought out by two wildlife photograhers, S.R.Madhusudan and G.S.Ravishankar in Mysuru on Saturday.

MYSURU

A New Year calendar featuring wildlife, animals found in and around Mysuru, and rare birds—brought out by press and wildlife photographers S.R. Madhusudan and G.S. Ravishankar—was released by dignitaries at a programme held at the Mysuru District Journalists' Association.

Speaking on the occasion, environmentalist and internationally renowned wildlife photographer Krupakar said that the calendar culture has a long history. Earlier, calendars with pictures of gods were seen everywhere, but times have changed and the content of calendars has also diversified. At present, human–tiger conflict is being widely discussed. However, there is a need to view wildlife with a scientific outlook. Scientific advancements are not being effectively utilised in this regard. At the same time, there is a need to reflect on the reasons behind human–tiger conflict and to think about our responsibility towards wildlife conservation. The wildlife and bird photographs featured in the newly released calendar serve precisely this purpose.

Another internationally renowned veteran Senani remarked that nowadays the tiger is being portrayed as a villain. However, this calendar has succeeded in instilling love and affection towards the tiger.

Retired forest officer Kantaraju said that a tiger never becomes a man-eater; it attacks only in self-defence. Therefore, animals too should be given importance equal to that of humans.

Madhusudan said that the objective of the calendar is to create awareness about wildlife among the general public. At a time when human–wildlife conflict is under intense discussion, the calendar has been designed to foster concern and compassion towards animals as well.

International Wushu champion Pranathi G, G.S. Ravishankar, Snake Shyam, Mahesh Kumar, and others were present at the event.

Ranjita and Sudha selected for Savitribai Phule Award

MYSURU

Journalist Ranjita Darshini R.S. and police constable Sudha K.N. have been selected for the State-level Aksharadavva Savitribai Phule–2026 Award, instituted by the Dalit Students' Parishat.

The awards will be presented at a programme to be held in Vijayapura on January 3, said Lokarakshak, Mandya district convener of the Dalit Students' Parishat. In a press release, he said that the award is given to recognise women achievers who have rendered significant service in various fields. For the current year, two achievers from Mandya district have been identified and selected for the honour. Journalist Ranjita Darshini is an anchor and newsreader and has authored several books. Notably, her novel "Sketch" was selected by the Kannada Book Authority and published. Her other works include the poetry collection "Kavyadarshini," the novel "Manaswini," and the short-verse poetry collection "Ratri Surida Mallige." Several of her stories and articles have been published in leading newspapers of the state. Similarly, the other awardee Sudha K.N. is a woman police constable serving at the KRS Police Station.

Ranjita

K.N.Sudha

REGULATION AND RESCHEDULING OF TRAINS

MYSURU

South Western Railway has notified that the following trains will be regulated and rescheduled due to line block and power block work for insertion and removal of temporary girders in connection with maintenance works at Arsikere, Birur, Chikjajur and Harihar yards. The details are as under:Train No. 07395 Ballari Junction – Davangere DEMU Journey commencing on 29.12.2025 to 01.01.2026 and 03.01.2026 will be regulated for 30 minutes en route.Train No. 16568 Shivamogga Town – Tumakuru Express Journey commencing on 29.12.2025 to 01.01.2026 and 03.01.2026 to 07.01.2026 will be regulated for 90 minutes en route. Train No. 12090 Shivamogga Town – KSR Bengaluru Janshatabdi Express Journey commencing on 29.12.2025 to 01.01.2026 and 03.01.2026 to 07.01.2026 will be regulated for 30 minutes en route.Train No. 56272 Chikkamagaluru – Shivamogga Town Passenger Journey commencing on 20.01.2026 to 22.01.2026 & 24.01.2026 to 26.01.2026 will be rescheduled by 30 minutes from Chikkamagaluru.

Hunting cheetah dies in Mysuru Zoo

MYSURU

Mysuru Zoo has announced the passing of the 6 year 8 months old male African Hunting Cheetah "Bruke" at the zoo on Saturday.

The animal was refused the food since 3 days and treatment was given by Veterinarians of Mysuru Zoo, but animal not responded to the treatment and succumb on the early hours of Saturday due to Meningitis. Bruke was acquired from Anne Van Dyke Cheetah Center, South Africa on August 17, 2020.

BJP demands NIA probe into gas cylinder blast that claimed three lives

MYSURU

The State BJP Backward Classes Morcha President Raghu Kautilya on Saturday urged the state government to hand over the helium gas cylinder blast which claimed three lives to the National Investigation Agency for a detailed probe.

Addressing a news conference here, he said Social Welfare and District in-charge Minister Dr H.C. Mahadevapppa is attempting to cover up the explosion incident that occurred in front of the Mysuru Palace by branding it as an accident. There appears to be no serious interest in conducting a thorough investigation into this tragic incident. In a similar manner, the previous two murder cases and the rape case of a minor girl that occurred near the Palace were treated lightly, and public attention was deliberately diverted.

Raghu said there is growing fear that a major threat is looming over the Mysuru Palace. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) should take over this case. Even before the true facts of the incident have come to light, Dr Mahadevappa has already declared it to be an accident.

Mysuru's heritage buildings are no longer secure. The maintenance of these heritage structures has completely deteriorated. Heritage means Mysuru, and Mysuru means heritage. Above all, the Mysuru Palace (Ambavilas), which symbolizes the heart of Mysuru, is now facing a serious security threat. Recently, a portion of the Palace entrance gate developed cracks and reached the verge of collapse, which is an extremely alarming development.

He said the security arrangements of the Palace are also not satisfactory. The existing system allows anyone to freely enter the Palace premises and even the Palace itself. Adequate technologies for screening and checking those entering the Palace complex have not been properly implemented. In this regard, it is necessary to deploy Central Armed Security Forces. The district administration has still not paid sufficient attention to improving law and order in Mysuru city. Repeated criminal incidents are being treated casually. More alarmingly, loss of lives occurring recently right in front of the Palace is a disturbing development. The recent helium gas explosion incident has been treated very lightly by the district administration and the government.

The BJP leader said there appears to be no system in place for the police to keep surveillance on people coming from other states, staying in lodges, and engaging in small-scale trade and footpath vending. As a result, innocent lives have been lost in front of the Palace due to footpath vendors carrying dangerous equipment.

The citizens of the city and tourists are extremely concerned about their safety. Had there been proper surveillance over balloon vendors carrying such dangerous equipment, the recent incident might not have occurred.

QUICK READ

Mall introduces special parking for pregnant women

Bengaluru

Nexus Mall in Bengaluru has introduced a thoughtful, pink-themed parking space exclusively for pregnant women. This initiative, aimed at providing safety and convenience, allows expectant mothers to avoid the usual mall congestion. A "Reserved for Mothers" sign has been placed in the area, and the parking lot is decorated in pink to make it easily identifiable. The concept, shared in a viral video by Akshay Raina, has received widespread praise. Many believe other malls across India should adopt this idea to help ensure a smoother shopping experience for pregnant women.

Concerns rise over indecent behavior by transgender individuals

Bengaluru

There has been growing concern among the public in Bengaluru over the behavior of some transgender individuals, who have been accused of causing disturbances in public spaces. Locals in the Chikkapet area, particularly near B.V.K. Ayyamgarh, have reported several incidents where individuals, while begging, have engaged in inappropriate and indecent acts. These actions, such as undressing in the middle of the road, shouting obscene words, and demanding money aggressively, have left many residents alarmed and fearful. Witnesses claim that these individuals harass pedestrians and, on occasion, even snatch purses or belongings from passersby. The situation has escalated in recent days, with many residents feeling unsafe and frustrated. Some of the disturbing incidents were caught on mobile phones and CCTV cameras, adding to the public outcry. As the complaints from local residents continue to grow, people have been urging the police to take immediate action.

DCM inaugurates Avarebele Mela 2025

The fair offers special dishes, a 5D theater, amusement zone, face painting, tattoos, and nail art

Continued from page 1

The 26th edition of the Basavanagudi Avarebele Mela was inaugurated by Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Saturday at the National College Grounds. Started in 2000 by Geetha Shivakumar of Vasavi Condiments, the fair celebrates Bengaluru's food, culture, and heritage. This year's event will run until January 4, 2026.

Shivakumar highlighted the cultural significance of peas, calling them the "king of pulses" akin to mangoes in fruits. He urged citizens to visit the fair and support farmers, noting that the event provides a direct platform for them to sell their produce and unique pea-based delicacies.

This year, the fair features special dishes such as avarebele momos, avarebele gulab jamun, water chestnut sambar, ice cream, avarebele puri, holige, and halwa. Beyond food, visitors can enjoy a 360-degree 5D theater, amusement zone, face painting, tattoo stalls, and nail art, making it a family-friendly experience.

Safety and convenience measures have been systematically arranged, including a first-aid station, feeding booth, wheelchair access, clean toilets, information desks, security personnel, ambulance services, and fire safety arrangements.

The Avarebele Mela, held annually for 25 years, has grown into a major attraction in Bengaluru. Last year, over 10 lakh visitors attended, and the organizers expect even higher turnout this year due to the expanded attractions. The fair operates daily from 10 am to 10 pm, inviting families and visitors to enjoy food, culture, and entertainment under one roof.

BJP slams Priyank Kharge over AI-generated image post

Continued from page 1

Karnataka BJP has strongly criticized IT Minister Priyank Kharge for sharing an AI-generated image that allegedly targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi and misrepresented a court order. The party accused Kharge of spreading fake news and demanded an unconditional apology from him.

The controversy arose after Kharge posted the image referencing the 2017 Unnao rape case. The Delhi High Court recently suspended the jail term of expelled BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar, citing that he had already served seven years and five months. BJP claimed Kharge distorted this judicial relief, which is under challenge by the CBI, to attack the Prime Minister and mislead the public.

The state BJP accused Kharge of mocking the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' initiative for political gain, claiming his post violated the Hate Speech Bill.

The state BJP also accused Kharge of mocking the government's flagship 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' initiative, claiming he twisted its meaning for political gain. The party argued that Kharge's post violated his own government's Hate Speech Bill by using communal imagery and ridiculing the judicial process. They warned of legal action if such misinformation continues.

Responding to the criticism, Kharge said the post was an inadvertent oversight, noting that the image may have been AI-generated. He also questioned the BJP's stance on protecting perpetrators, asking why no action had been taken against POCSO-related offenders in Karnataka and why certain leaders were still celebrated within the party.

The minister has since deleted the post but continues to defend his position, accusing the BJP of deflecting from larger accountability issues. The incident highlights growing concerns over the misuse of AI-generated content in political discourse and the need for careful verification before public sharing.

33RD ANNAMMADEVI ANNUAL FESTIVAL VILLAGE FAIR

Sri Sri Kalabhairaveshwara Swami Community Hall was inaugurated in a grand ceremony by Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Dr. Nirmalanandanatha Mahaswamiji in Kumaraswamy Layout Bengaluru.

KEA announces remaining medical, dental seats

BENGALURU

The Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) has announced the allocation of leftover seats in medical and dental courses. For medical admissions, a total of 8 seats—7 remaining and 1 vacated—will be allocated on December 29. MVJ Medical College in Hoskote has 5 seats, M.R.M.C. Kalaburagi has 2 seats, and SDM Medical College, Dharwad has 1 seat due to a candidate withdrawing for health reasons. Candidates must submit the prescribed DD (₹40.11 lakh for MVJ, ₹39.11 lakh for M.R.M.C, ₹35.15 lakh for SDM) and original documents at the KEA office by 12 pm, with option entries allowed till 1 pm. For dental courses, 5 vacant seats will be filled on December 31 following the stray vacancy round. Eligible candidates must submit DD and original documents by 11:30 am, enter options from 12–1 pm.

Youth stabbed to death in Bengaluru after feud

BENGALURU

Bengaluru was rocked by violence yesterday when a young man was stabbed to death in the Sheshadripur area over a petty dispute. The tragic incident occurred around 4 pm on Triveni Road, when Harshitya Dav, a local youth, was attacked by a mob while crossing the street.

Police have identified two suspects, Kiran and Bharath, who are said to have had a longstanding feud with Harshit and other youths in the area for the past two months. The two men, known for their petty quarrels, had allegedly made several threats, including one to kill Harshit. The stabbing occurred during one of these heated confrontations.

Harshit, despite being severely injured, managed to flee the scene but was later

found with serious wounds to his hand. He was rushed to a nearby hospital for treatment. CCTV footage from the area captured the entire incident, helping police in their investigation.

Authorities have registered a case at the Sheshadripur police station and have launched a manhunt to arrest Kiran and Bharath. The attack has sparked tensions in the area, leading to fears of further violence. The police have urged the public to remain calm as they work to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The Commissioner stressed road cleanliness, ensuring Municipal Corp work maintains safe, clean roads and footpaths for public use

Bengaluru North City Corporation clears debris from outer road

BENGALURU

The North City Corporation of Bengaluru has launched a major cleanup drive along the Outer Ring Road, from Bhadrappa Layout to Guruguntepalya Signal near Tumkur Road. Municipal Commissioner Pommala Sunil Kumar, during an inspection, directed officials to immediately remove building debris and soil found on footpaths and service roads.

The inspection revealed that some areas along the road were littered with construction waste and soil, posing inconvenience to pedestrians and vehicles. Commissioner Kumar noted that while cleanup work was already underway by B Smile officials, he instructed them to expedite the process and ensure complete removal of all useless debris.

Accompanied by engineers from B Smile and the Solid Waste Department, the Commissioner emphasized the importance of maintaining cleanliness along public roads. "All work under the jurisdiction of the Municipal Corporation must be carried out properly, ensuring roads and footpaths are safe and clean for public use," he said.

Following the inspection, ward engineers and solid waste staff carried out a mass cleaning operation along the service roads and footpaths. They were instructed to regularly monitor and maintain cleanliness to prevent future accumulation of debris.

Joint Commissioners Mohammed Naeem Momin and Pallavi, along with concerned Executive Engineers, Assistant Executive Engineers, and other municipal staff, participated in the inspection and supervised the cleanup work. The coordinated effort is part of the North City Corporation's ongoing commitment to keeping Bengaluru's roads tidy and safe for commuters and pedestrians alike.

Group Pharma showcases dental innovations at IPC 2025

BENGALURU

Bengaluru-based Group Pharmaceuticals made a remarkable impact at the Indian Pharmaceutical Congress (IPC) Expo 2025, showcasing its latest dental innovations and advanced oral care solutions.

The company's stall became a major attraction for industry experts, entrepreneurs, and visitors, particularly in the 'Condition-Based Oral Care' segment.

Sunil Attavar, Managing Director of Group Pharmaceuticals, highlighted the growing global integration of the Indian pharmaceutical sector and the company's commitment to ethical, high-quality manufacturing. He emphasized that the upgraded products aim to meet international standards while addressing specific dental health needs. Among the highlights were the enhanced versions of the company's popular brands, Shy-NM and Amflor series.

Seabird driver arrested for drunk driving

BENGALURU

Just days after a tragic bus fire in Chitradurga that claimed seven lives, a Seabird Tourist bus driver was arrested for drunk driving in Bengaluru, reigniting concerns over passenger safety. The driver, heading from Bengaluru to Goa, was caught by Upparpet traffic police during a routine checkpoint inspection on Friday night.

The incident occurred as part of heightened security measures for the New Year, with more than 140 checkpoints set up across the city. When the bus was stopped near Majestic, the driver tested well over the legal alcohol limit. He was immediately arrested, and his documents were seized. Police coordinated with Seabird to ensure the passengers were not stranded and arranged for a replacement driver, allowing the journey to continue with a delay.

This arrest has fueled fresh outrage, especially after the fatal Chitradurga accident on December 25, where a Seabird bus collided with a container truck, leading to the deaths of several passengers. While the truck driver was blamed for the crash, the drunk driving case has raised concerns about the company's oversight and the safety of long-distance buses.

The Bengaluru Traffic Police have intensified their crackdown on drunk driving, registering over 500 cases on Friday alone, with more than 2,000 cases in the past three days. Authorities have warned that strict action will be taken against errant drivers.

BMTC driver attacked with helmet during a fight

Bengaluru: A shocking incident occurred in Bengaluru when a BMTC driver was attacked with a helmet during a fight with a woman near a bus stand. A video of the altercation, showing the heated exchange between the driver and the woman in the middle of the road, has gone viral. The situation escalated when the woman allegedly attempted to strike the driver with a helmet. The incident is under investigation by the police, who are looking into the cause of the dispute and taking action accordingly.

Married man commits suicide amidst alleged affair

CHIKKABALLAPUR

Balaji Singh, 30, a married man from Bapuji Nagar in Gudibande town, Chikkaballapur district, was found dead at his home after committing suicide by hanging in the early hours of Friday. Balaji, married for eight years with a six-year-old daughter, was financially well-off and earned a living by renting out cars.

Reports suggest that Balaji had been involved in an illicit relationship with a woman from Shidlaghatta. After his wife discovered the affair, conflicts arose, leading Balaji to decide to distance himself from the woman and return to his family. However, sources indicate that the woman allegedly continued to pressure and blackmail him, refusing to leave him alone.

The circumstances of Balaji's death have raised suspicions. While some reports point to harassment and

blackmail by the woman as possible triggers, others indicate that Balaji himself did not leave any clear note or explanation for his actions. His wife has claimed that the affair and related stress contributed to his decision to end his life.

Police have registered a case of suspicious death and are investigating the matter to determine the exact reasons behind Balaji Singh's suicide, including the role of the alleged affair in the tragedy.

Authorities are questioning family members and acquaintances to piece together events leading up to the incident.

DOCTORS IN TRANSITION

Health department plans major doctor transfers

BENGALURU

The Karnataka Health Department has announced a major reshuffle, planning to transfer doctors from community health centers (CHCs) to taluka hospitals, a move that has shocked residents across the state. The decision primarily affects pediatricians, obstetricians, and anesthetists working in CHCs where fewer than 30 deliveries occur each month.

With over 270 CHCs spread across the state, these centers have long served as convenient medical hubs for rural populations, offering essential health services throughout the day. However, low delivery rates at several centers have prompted the department to rethink doctor allocations. According to officials, the shift aims to ensure that critical specialists are available where demand is higher, at taluka-level hospitals.

The Health Department has already prepared monthly delivery reports for all CHCs and identified underperforming centers. Doctors from these centers, including obstetricians, anesthetists, pediatricians, radiologists, and general medicine specialists, are expected to be reassigned to taluka hospitals in the coming weeks.

While officials say the move will improve medical care at larger hospitals, locals worry about the reduced availability of specialists at community health centers. Residents fear that traveling longer distances for childbirth or pediatric care could become a challenge, especially for those in remote villages.

This initiative follows a similar approach recently seen in the education sector, where the government merged schools to address teacher shortages. The Health Department stresses that the doctor transfer is part of a broader plan to optimize healthcare services across Karnataka, ensuring that patients in high-demand areas receive timely and quality care.

As the reshuffle takes effect, authorities urge the public to stay informed about the changes and plan visits to nearby taluka hospitals for specialized medical services.

QUICK READ

Woman's ear severed by chain snatchers

Vijayapura

In a shocking incident in Divatageri Galli, Vijayapura, chain snatchers brutally attacked Kalavati Gaikwad (45) while she was on her way to buy milk. The two masked men stole her gold necklace and earrings, cutting off her ear in the process. The thieves, reportedly under the influence of drugs, also attacked her face before fleeing with 10 grams of gold. Kalavati is now receiving treatment in a private hospital where doctors have stitched her ear. The police have registered a case and are investigating the crime. This attack highlights the ongoing menace of chain snatching in the city.

BJP PROTESTS AGAINST THE STATE'S HATE SPEECH BILL

Halappa criticized the state government, claiming the bill undermines the Constitution and threatens freedom of expression and protest

SHIVAMOGGA

The BJP staged a protest on Saturday seeking the withdrawal of the controversial Hate Speech Bill, expressing concern that the law suppresses freedom of speech and threatens democratic rights. The protest was held at Sagar Hotel and was attended by key party leaders, including former minister and state vice-president Harthala Halappa.

Speaking at the event, Halappa criticized the state government, claiming that the bill undermines the Indian Constitution drafted by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. He said, "If this law is implemented, citizens and politicians will face charges for merely expressing opinions or protesting against organizations like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh or other national events. The government is already taking steps to punish politicians and activists who speak out."

T.D. Meghraj, the former district president of BJP, stated that the bill had already been approved by the state legislature using majority votes. He argued that the legislation is anti-democratic and threatens the basic right to freedom of speech. "The government is awaiting an undeclared emergency to implement this law. This move not only endangers opposition voices but also stifles the public's ability to protest peacefully," Meghraj said.

The BJP leaders emphasized that the bill, if enforced, could be used to intimidate opposition parties, activists, and ordinary citizens, effectively curtailing democratic debate. They urged the state government to reconsider and repeal the legislation, warning that continuing with it could further erode public trust and damage the credibility of the administration, especially after recent local body election setbacks.

The protest highlighted the party's strong stance on protecting free expression and its call for democratic safeguards in the state's legislative process.

Udupi rescue operation sends beggars back home

Forty beggars, including minors, rescued from Udupi and safely sent to Rajasthan in a coordinated operation by Child Protection Unit and volunteers

UDUPI

In a major humanitarian effort, forty beggars, including minors, were rescued from Udupi city and sent back to their hometown in Rajasthan on Friday. The operation was led by the Child Protection Unit in collaboration with social worker Nityananda Olkadu and his team.

The beggars, who were found at the Rajangana pilgrim parking lot near Sri Krishna Math, included children who had dropped out of school and were forced to beg alongside their parents. The operation was prompted by public complaints received through the Children's Helpline, highlighting the exploitation of minors in the city's begging network.

Speaking to the media, Nityananda Olkadu, District Citizens' Committee Coordinator, said, "Many beggars in Udupi are from other states and districts. Some children are deprived of education and compelled to beg. With the cooperation of the Child Protection Unit, we have arranged to send about 40 people safely back to Rajasthan by train."

The rescue team included staff from the Child Protection Unit—Vishal, Ramya, Akshata, and Vidyashree—as well as the Police Emergency Helpline 112 personnel, along with volunteers Yogish and Savita. The coordinated effort ensured the safe transportation of the rescued individuals to their hometown, providing relief to both the victims and the concerned public.

Nityananda Olkadu, known for his 25 years of dedicated social service, has been actively supporting vulnerable sections of society, including orphans, the needy, and exploited individuals, without any personal gain. His lifelong commitment to social welfare, coupled with the Child Protection Unit's initiative, made this rescue operation a success and underscored the importance of protecting children from exploitation.

The operation has been widely appreciated by the public, highlighting the need for continued vigilance and proactive measures to safeguard minors from being forced into begging.

11-year-old injured as youths stop bike over alleged beef transport

MANGALURU

Tension prevailed briefly in parts of Bajpe police station limits on Wednesday after an 11-year-old girl was injured when two youths allegedly intercepted a motorcycle on suspicion of illegal beef transport.

Police said the incident took place at around 10 am on the Malali–Naralapadavu Road when Abdul Sattar Mullarpattna was travelling on a two-wheeler with his daughter. Two youths allegedly stopped the bike and blocked its movement, leading to an altercation.

"In the course of the incident, the child's leg came into contact with the hot silencer of the motorcycle, resulting in burn injuries," a police official said. Passersby and local residents rushed to help and shifted the injured girl to a nearby hospital. Doctors have said her condition is stable.

The youths were later identified as Sumith Bhandari (21) and Rajath Nayak (30), both residents of Yedapadavu. Police said they had arrived at the spot in a Tata Sumo vehicle and suspected that beef was being transported illegally.

Around 19 kg of beef was allegedly found at the spot, and police said no supporting documents were produced. Following the incident, Sattar reportedly fled the scene, leaving behind the motorcycle. Bajpe police have registered a case and initiated an investigation. "Stopping vehicles on suspicion without authority is a serious matter. We are also verifying the legality of the meat transport," the officer said.

'Rashtrakke Madhyasthike 2.0' launched to resolve pending cases

RAMANAGARA

A significant campaign titled Rashtrakke Madhyasthike 2.0 has been launched across the district to resolve pending cases in district and subordinate courts, officials said. The initiative, announced by District and Sessions Judge and Chairman of the District Legal Services Authority M.H. Annayyanavar, will run for 90 days starting from January 2.

The campaign aims to provide speedy and amicable justice by referring suitable pending cases for mediation. Under directions from the Mediation Consultation Project Committee (MCPC), cases pending in courts will be addressed through mediation, ensuring quick resolution outside regular trial procedures.

The mediation centers will handle a variety of cases, including matrimonial and family disputes, motor accident claims, dishonoured cheque cases, commercial and service matters, compoundable criminal cases, consumer disputes, land-related cases, and other civil matters. Currently, the district has around 36,498 pending cases across different courts, including divorce and domestic violence cases, motor accident claims (1,425), compoundable criminal cases (1,266), land disputes (812), cheque dishonour cases (4,097), and other civil disputes (27,867 estimated).

To ensure effective implementation, 33 experienced lawyers with over 20 years of practice have agreed to serve as mediators. Cases referred to mediation centers will be resolved through structured dialogue involving both parties, under the supervision of the District Legal Services Authority and local court mediation centers. The campaign is expected to benefit litigants by expediting case resolution, saving time and money, and promoting social harmony. Judge M.H. Annayyanavar encouraged all eligible parties to make use of this opportunity to achieve timely and amicable justice.

Kannada stars light up Belagavi Utsav Festival

BELAGAVI

Belagavi witnessed a star-studded celebration as popular Kannada actors and actresses arrived to participate in the much-awaited Belagavi Utsav. The festival, organized by the Karnataka Rakshana Vedike Praveen Shetty faction, drew huge crowds eager to catch glimpses of their favorite stars.

Star actors Dolly Dhananjaya, Ninasam Satish, and actresses Saptami Gowda and Karave State President Praveen Shetty were warmly received in the city. The event began with the stars garlanding the statue of Kittur Rani Chennamma at Chennamma Circle, followed by enthusiastic waves to their fans.

In the evening, a musical performance by renowned singer Rajesh Krishnan at Sardar Maidan added charm to the festival, attracting thousands of attendees. Dolly Dhananjaya urged fans to enjoy Kannada movies without rivalry, emphasizing the importance of family and unity. "Fans don't need to fight. Watch movies comfortably and celebrate. Our life is our language, our pride," he said.

Ninasam Satish praised Belagavi's Kannadigas for protecting their cultural identity and assured that the Kannada film industry stands with them. Actress Saptami Gowda encouraged audiences to support Kannada cinema, highlighting the struggle behind producing regional films and the impact of fan support on artists' careers.

Praveen Shetty reaffirmed the importance of safeguarding Belagavi's Kannada identity, warning against any attempts to undermine the city's culture. He urged strict enforcement of Kannada language policies in the border region and praised the district administration for maintaining harmony during the festival.

Belagavi Utsav, with its blend of cultural pride, cinema, and music, reinforced the city's dedication to Kannada heritage while celebrating the region's talented film fraternity.

Mangalore Kambala Showcases 'NAVAVIDHA–NAVAVARSHA'

MANGALURU

The ninth edition of the Mangalore Kambala unfolded as a celebration of Tulunadu's cultural pride and a renewed call for development, with Dakshina Kannada MP Capt. Brijesh Chowta urging citizens to work collectively towards a "Viksit Mangaluru".

Inaugurating the event at Goldfinch City, Bangrakuloor, Chowta said Mangaluru is not just a city but the cultural soul of Tulunadu. He stressed the need to oppose misinformation about the district and ensure that development initiatives include strong local participation.

He said the Kambala, started eight years ago, has successfully united people from all sections of society and grown into a symbol of cultural harmony. This year's 'Navavidha–Navavarsha' theme reflects innovation alongside tradition, he added.

The inauguration featured ceremonial lamp lighting by Chittaranjan of the Sri Brahma Baidarkala Garadi Kshetra, with blessings from Gurupura Vajradehi Math and Kateel Durgaparameshwari Temple representatives.

The collective singing of 'Vande Mataram' by 150 students to mark the song's 150th anniversary created a powerful patriotic moment. The event also included exhibitions, environmental initiatives, honours for entrepreneurs, and competitions for children, adding vibrancy to the traditional sporting spectacle.

Honor killing: Leaders call for victim support

HUBBALLI

In the aftermath of an honor killing in Inam Veerapur, Hubballi taluk, the victims have been admitted to Vivekananda Hospital. Former Minister Shankar Patila Mune Nakoppa, along with Speaker Basavaraj Jahoratti, met to discuss the health of the victims. They also held a meeting with Dalit Liberation Committee leaders to gather information about the incident and explore government solutions. Both Nakoppa and Jahoratti expressed deep concern over the honor killing and emphasized the need for support and justice for the victims, urging authorities to address this tragic issue swiftly.

PUBLIC NOTICE

My Client **Mr. K.R. DHARMARAJ** residing at Kuttavadi Gate, Hunsur Taluk, Mysore District, is the full and absolute owner of the Schedule Property and he has lost the Original REGISTERED CONSENT DEED Dt:19-02-2018 in Mysore on 22-11-2025 and the same is not traced till date. The said Registered Consent Deed was executed by Sri Suresh infavour of his wife Smt. Hemavathi and the same is registered in Book-1, as Document No.HUN-1-10739-2018-19, stored in CD No.HUND214 on 19.02.2018, in the Office Sub-Registrar, Hunsur. Hence, the finders of the said Original Registered Consent Deed Dt:19.02.2018 is hereby informed to contact the undersigned Advocate within 07 days from the date of this publication. Therefore, any person/s, Financial Institution/s having any right, claim or interest in the Schedule Property or portion of the Schedule Property, shall forward their objections to the under signed in writing along with supporting documents within 07 (Seven) days from the date of this Public Notice. Any claim or objection received after the expiry of the said period will not be binding over the schedule mentioned property and my client.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY : All that part and parcel of the Residential House Property bearing RDPR PID No.152200202007400115, Property No.14/14 as per the Gramapanchayat records situated at Kuttavadi Village, Bilikere Hobli, Hunsur Taluk, Mysore District, constructed on the Site measuring East to West : 12.19 Meters and North to South : 9.14 Meters, with Total Site Area of 111.41 Square Meters and Constructed Area of 40.96 Square Meters, coming under the limits of the Karimuddanahalli Grama Panchayat, Hunsur Taluk, Bounded on :- East By : Site of Chikkanayaka, West By : Road North By : Site of Neelegowda, South By : House of Shivanna.

Sd/- Shivakumara, Advocate & Notary
No. 2917/A, CH-52/A, Opp. TTL college
Kantharaja Urs Road,
Saraswathipuram, Mysuru-570009
Mob.: 9342257404

Date: 26-12-2025
Place: Hunsur

NAME CHANGE

I, **NAWAB KHAN**, resident of No.68, Bharath Nagar, M S Palya, Vidyaranyapura, Bangalore-560097, have changed my name to **NAWAB ULLA KHAN**, vide affidavit dated: 22.12.2025, before Notary MIR ZIA ULLA, Bengaluru.

NAME CHANGE

I, **AZGAR SHARIFF**, S/o MUNNIR SHARIF, Resident of No 10, Samadana Nagar, K G Halli, A C Post, Bengaluru 560045, have changed my name to **ASGAR SHARIFF**, Vide Affidavit Dated 26.12.2025 before notary R BASAVARAJU, Bengaluru.

NAME CHANGE

I, **SYEDA AYESHA SULTANA**, W/o. Syed Ayub Hussaini, Residing at No.9 & 10, 1 Floor, 27th Main Road, Behind Noorani Masjid, Puttayyanapalya, Jayanagar 9th Block, Bengaluru 560 069, have changed my name to **AYEESHA HUSSAINI**, vide affidavit dated: 23.12.2025, before Notary V.RAJASHEKHARA, Bengaluru.

CHANGE OF NAME

It is for general information that I, KARTHIK N D S/o N R DODDAWAD, R/o Doddaballapura Talluk, Ojenahalli, Gundamgere, Dod Ballapur, Bangalore Rural, Karnataka - 561203, declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as N D KARTHIK in my 10th class educational documents and name of mine and my father name has been wrongly written as KARTHIK ND and DODDAWAD NR in my 12th class educational documents. The actual name of mine and my father are KARTHIK N D and N R DODDAWAD respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

NAME CHANGE

I, **SHAMSUN**, W/o Nawab Ulla Khan, resident of No.68, Singapura Main Road, Bharath Nagar, M.S. Palya, Vidyaranyapura, Bangalore-560097, have changed my name to **SHAMSHUNNISA**, vide affidavit dated: 26.12.2025, before Notary MIR ZIA ULLA, Bengaluru.

NAME CHANGE

I, **MOHAMMED AJMAL AZIZ**, S/o Abdul Aziz, Resident of No 20, 3rd Floor, 5th Cross, Near J K Residence, BHEL Layout, Chengaiah Compound, Jayanagar Post, Bengaluru 560041, have changed my name to **MOHAMMED AJMAL AZEEZ**, Vide Affidavit Dated 26.12.2025 before notary R BASAVARAJU, Bengaluru.

KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT STOCK (SECURITIES)
Vidhana Soudha, Bengaluru

NOTICE

1. Aggregate Amount : Total Rs.6000 crore (Rs.1,000 crore - Re-issue of 7.10% SGS 2032; Rs.1,000 crore - Re-issue of 7.03% SGS 2033; Rs.2,000 crore 11-Year Tenure; Rs.2,000 crore-13-Year Tenure)
2. Method of Issue : By auction, through RBI (PDO), Mumbai
3. Date of auction : December 30, 2025

Government of Karnataka invites subscription to the above securities. Copies of the Notification and Application forms may be obtained from PDO, RBI, Bangalore. Non-competitive bidding facility has been introduced by RBI to encourage participation of retail investors. The Government stock up to 10% of the notified amount of the sale will be allotted to eligible individuals and institutions. Sample Tender Forms and the revised scheme of Non-competitive bidding facility is available on the website **www.rbi.org.in.**

Sd/- (Ikram Shariff)
Joint Secretary to Government
(Budget & Resources), Finance Department

DIPR/CP/4678/Zen/2025-26

CH CLASSIFIEDS
To place a classified ad contact: **080-41209042**

ALTUM CREDO HOME FINANCE PRIVATE LTD
Regd. Office: Floor No. 7, Kalpataru Infinia, Wakdewadi, Shivajinagar, Pune - 411005. Maharashtra (India)

APPENDIX IV **POSSESSION NOTICE** (FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY)

The undersigned being the authorized officer of Altum Credo Home Finance Pvt. Ltd., (ACHFL), Under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 ("SARFAESI Act, 2002") and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 ("Enforcement Rules"). Demand Notice(s) issued by the Authorized Officer of the company to the Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) (collectively referred to as the "Borrowers") mention herein below to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to Borrowers and the public in general that the under signed has taken symbolic / physical possession of the property described herein below in supersize of powers conferred upon him under Sub-section(4)of Section 13 of the said act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement rules, 2002. The borrower's attention is invited to prevision of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in receipt of time available, to redeem the secured assets. The borrowers in particular and the public in general are hereby caution not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ACHFL for an amount mention herein under with the interest thereon.

Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) Loan A/c No.
1. Muniraju A (Borrower) **2. Lakshmamma H** (Co-Borrower) **Lan No: S131204000008**
Top up Lan: S131209000015

Description of Secured Asset
All that piece and parcel of Immovable Property bearing Khatha No. 47, Situated at KOWDENAHALLI, Krishnarajapura Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk, presently within the limits of BBMP, previously Krishnarajapura CMC Limits, measuring East to West 13 ½ feet and North to South 27 feet and **Bounded on:- East:** Foot Way, **West:** Property belongs to Subbanarasamma, **South:** Road, **North:** Property belongs to Narayanappa.

Date of Demand Notice and Amount
18.09.2025 / Rs. 7,33,028/- (Rupees Seven Lakh Thirty Three Thousand Twenty Eight Only) & Top Up **Rs. 5,24,751** (Rupees Five Lakh Twenty Four Thousand Seven Hundred Fifty One Only)

NPA Date - 29.08.2025	Date of Possession : 22.12.2025

Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) Loan A/c No.
1. Suresh T M (Borrower) **2. Rajeshwari B** (Co-Borrower)
Lan No: 1172020100015 & Top up LAN: S117209000029

Description of Secured Asset
All that piece and parcel of the property bearing Khaneshmari No. 58, Property No. 58, situated at Thammenahalli Paya Village, Thammenahalli Dhakle, Dhakle, Dasanapura Hobli, Bangalore North Taluk, Bangalore, measuring East to West 55 Feet and North to South 17 Feet, in all measuring 935 Sq. Ft., and **Bounded as under: East:** Road, **West:** Private Property, **South:** Road, **North:** Late Lakhmana's Property.

Date of Demand Notice and Amount
10.10.2025 / Rs. 9,64,436/- (Rupees Nine Lakh Sixty Four Thousand Four Hundred Thirty Six Only) & Top up Lan: **Rs. 3,84,027/-** (Rupees Three Lakh Eighty Four Thousand Twenty Seven Only)

NPA Date - 28.09.2025	Date of Possession : 22.12.2025

STATUTORY NOTICE TO BORROWERS/ CO-BORROWERS AND GUARANTORS Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) are hereby put to caution that the property may be sold at any time hereinafter by way of public auction/tenders and as such this may also be treated as a notice under Rule 6,8 & 9 of Security (interest) Enforcement Rules,2002.

Sd/-
Place : Bangalore, Karnataka **Authorized Officer**
Date : 28.12.2025 **Altum Credo Home Finance Pvt. Ltd. (ACHFL)**

CHAMARAJANAGAR INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES
(An Autonomous Institute of Govt of Karnataka)
Sy. No: 124, Yadapura Village, Kasaba Hobli, Chamarajanagar-571313
E-Mail: **directorcimscrnagara@gmail.com Tel: 08226-226701,**
Website: **https://cimscrnagara.karnataka.gov.in**

No. Sup/Skill Lab./154/2025-26 Dated: 18.12.2025

TENDER NOTIFICATION

The Tender has been invited as per Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act 1999 Rule 2000 for the Supply, Installation, Commissioning of Mannequin and other Items for Skill Lab. at this Institution. Interested Tenderers are informed to apply the tender on or before 23.01.2026 at 5.00 pm by paying E.M.D.

If, the last date for submission of tender declared as Government Holiday, the next working day shall be treated as last date. No separate Notification in this regard will be issued. Interested tenderers may contact the college authorities for furthers information.

Dean and Director
Chamarajanagara Institute of Medical Sciences, Chamarajanagar.

No: DIPR CHACHAGAR: 594:2025-26

QUICK READ

Theatre Stampede: 23 Accused Including Actor Allu Arjun

HYDERABAD

Hyderabad police have filed a charge sheet against 23 people, including actor Allu Arjun, over a woman's death in a stampede during the 'Pushpa-2' premiere on December 4, 2024. The theatre management is the main accused, while Arjun is listed as accused number 11. The incident injured the woman's eight-year-old son. Arjun was briefly arrested on December 13, 2024, and later granted bail. Both the actor and film makers provided financial help to the family, supported by the Telangana government.

Liquor Dispute Ends In Woman's Brutal Murder

NANDURBAR

In Nandurbar district, a 45-year-old woman, Shanubai Shanya Thakre, was brutally murdered after leaving home to watch Diwali celebrations on December 29. Her bloodied body was found in an abandoned house with severe head injuries. Police investigations revealed the killing was linked to a liquor money dispute. Two accused have been arrested in connection with the crime. The shocking incident has left the local community in fear and grief, highlighting rising violence over financial disputes in villages.

TMC Alleges Voter Names Deleted To Favor BJP

KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) has accused the Election Commission of deleting lakhs of genuine voter names in West Bengal to benefit the BJP ahead of the 2026 Assembly polls. A TMC delegation met Chief Electoral Officer Manoj Agarwal on Saturday and submitted a memorandum highlighting the issue. Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya claimed around 58 lakh voters were wrongly marked as "unmapped" during the SIR exercise. TMC said different rules were being applied in Bengal compared to other states.

Ex-Diplomat Warns Bangladesh Unrest May Escalate Soon

Former Indian diplomat Suresh K Goel warns that Bangladesh's recent calm may precede a surge in violence and political instability

NEW DELHI

Ex-diplomat Suresh K Goel has expressed concern over Bangladesh's current political situation, asserting that Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus's decisions are heavily influenced by jihadist elements. Goel warned that the present calm is "the calm before the storm," highlighting the growing complexity in Bangladesh's political landscape. He noted that Yunus, given his international reputation, could stabilise the country, but external pressures appear to be dictating

his actions.Goel stressed that the rising influence of jihadist groups is not limited to attacks on minority communities but is increasingly shaping political decisions. "These external factors are complicating the politics of Bangladesh and may lead to further unrest," he said.

The warning comes after the assassination of Sharif Osman Hadi, Inqilab Moncho convenor and a key figure of last year's July Uprising. Hadi was shot on December 12 while riding a rickshaw in Dhaka's Bijoynagar area and died on December 18 in Singapore, where he was flown for advanced treatment.

Following his death, protests erupted in Dhaka, with activists gathering at Shahbagh intersection demanding justice. Police reports indicate that two assailants on a motorcycle opened fire at Hadi. He was initially treated at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, then shifted to Evercare Hospital before being flown abroad.

Goel expressed disappointment with the interim government's handling of the unrest and urged caution, noting that domestic stability could be jeopardised if the influence of extremist elements continues unchecked.

He called for stronger measures to prevent the political environment from deteriorating further.

RSP Leader Demands Answers On Sabarimala Gold Case

KOLLAM

RSP leader Shibu Baby John on Saturday questioned CPI(M) over its claim that a photograph showing Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan with Sabarimala gold loss case accused Unnikrishnan Potty was AI-generated. John alleged that CPI(M) leaders lack understanding of artificial intelligence and suggested that the party secretary was unaware of modern technologies capable of detecting AI-generated images. John shared a photograph on social media showing Potty seated alongside former Devaswom Minister and CPI(M) leader Kadakampally Surendran and a police officer, reportedly taken at Bengaluru airport. He stated that the Chief Minister's Office had confirmed the event actually took place, questioning who had invited Potty and the significance of the key-handover ceremony where only a single ambulance was donated to the police.

He alleged that the gold loss at Sabarimala could not have occurred without political leadership knowledge and raised questions on whether Potty had contributed funds to the Global Ayyappa Summit organised by the Travancore Devaswom Board. John criticised the CPI(M) for registering cases against those who asked such questions instead of providing clarifications.

Clarifying his earlier remarks, John ruled out any controversy regarding RSP MP M K Premachandran attending a tea party hosted by the Lok Sabha Speaker, calling it a normal parliamentary engagement.

BJP-Sena Near Final Deal For BMC Polls

MUMBAI

BJP and Shiv Sena are close to finalising seat-sharing for Mumbai civic polls, aiming to contest 200 of 227 wards together.

The BJP and Shiv Sena are on the verge of sealing their seat-sharing arrangement for the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections. Reports suggest an agreement has been reached for 200 of the 227 Mumbai wards ahead of the January 15 polls. A late-night meeting at Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's residence in Thane discussed alliance strategies for upcoming civic elections in Mumbai, Thane, Kalyan-Dombivli, and Navi Mumbai.

Additional talks are scheduled for other civic bodies, including Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, Panvel, and Mira-Bhayandar. Congress is exploring new political alignments, including discussions with Prakash Ambedkar-led Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA), following disputes with Shiv Sena (UBT) over its alliance with the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS).

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut confirmed the party will contest BMC elections in alliance with MNS and Sharad Pawar-led NCP. This comes after Sharad Pawar rejected a seat-sharing proposal from the Ajit Pawar faction, which had offered only 35 seats to his party.

Meanwhile, Raj Thackeray is expected to chair an MNS leaders' meeting at Shivtirth residence to finalise the party's campaign strategy, including issues and candidate selection.

Across Maharashtra, alliance talks are ongoing, with parties holding parallel meetings to finalise seat-sharing arrangements and strategies for local body polls.

The BJP-Sena alliance appears determined to consolidate its position in Mumbai, while opposition parties explore new combinations to challenge the ruling coalition in upcoming civic elections.

Video Of Dhirendra Shastri Sparks Political Controversy

RAIPUR

A controversy erupted after a video showed Bageshwar Dham head, spiritual preacher Dhirendra Shastri, arriving in Raipur on a government aircraft, with an on-duty police officer touching his feet. The Congress alleged "misuse of public money," while the BJP defended the officer, calling it an act of personal faith.

Shastri, accompanied by State Minister Guru Khushwant Saheb, visited Bhilai in Durg district for a religious discourse on Thursday. The video shows Shastri and the minister exiting the aircraft. The officer first salutes the minister, then removes his cap and shoes to touch Shastri's feet, blending protocol and personal devotion. The clip circulated widely on social media, drawing criticism from users who called the act a "mockery of uniform ethics" and questioned the use of a state aircraft for a religious figure. Others defended the gesture as a combination of duty and personal faith. Chhattisgarh Congress communication head Sushil Anand Shukla demanded clarification from the government, calling the aircraft arrangement a "wastage of public money" and noting that Shastri is not a recognized religious head. He accused Shastri of acting against India's composite culture and spreading social discord, saying "superstition and hypocrisy cannot survive for long." BJP state spokesperson and MP Santosh Pandey countered that officers expressing devotion should not be questioned and cited examples of religious practices by other employees.

Railways Misses Deadline, Kavach System To Launch 2026

NEW DELHI

The Railway Ministry has missed the December 2025 deadline for installing the automatic train protection system, Kavach, on the high-density New Delhi-Mumbai and New Delhi-Howrah routes, but hopes to operationalise it in 2026.

Kavach is an indigenously developed Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system designed to automatically apply brakes if a loco pilot fails to maintain speed limits, enhancing safety on busy routes. Officials said about 25% of the work has been completed, with key components being installed on remaining sections. Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw updated the Lok Sabha on December 17 that Kavach 4.0 has been successfully commissioned on 738 route km, including Palwal-Mathura-Nagda on Delhi-Mumbai and Howrah-Bardhaman on Delhi-Howrah routes. Optical fibre cables have been laid on

7,129 km, track-side equipment installed on 5,672 route km, Station Kavach set up at 860 stations, and Loco Kavach fitted on 4,154 locomotives. Bids have been invited for another 9,069 locomotives to receive Kavach 4.0.

Experts highlighted that growing train operations demand technical aids like Kavach to reduce human error. The system first underwent passenger train trials in February 2016 and was adopted nationally in July 2020.

Officials noted that initially only three companies were approved for Kavach installation, but the number has now increased to over five, with hopes of crossing 20 in 2026. They emphasised that the vast Indian Railways network of 78,000 km requires more manufacturers to expedite full deployment.

Vaishnaw described Kavach 4.0 as a major milestone for Indian Railways safety, covering the Golden Quadrilateral, Golden Diagonal, High-Density, and other critical routes. The Ministry remains committed to rolling out the system across remaining sections in the coming year.

Sanjeev Sanyal Says India Can Be Strong Without Jingoism

NEW DELHI

Economist and historian Sanjeev Sanyal on Saturday said that standing up for India's interests does not require becoming jingoistic. He noted that countries, especially in West Asia, may want to be part of India's growth story if they can sell energy or arms, as India remains a fast-growing economy.

Sanyal, a member of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, said international relations are complex, with nations acting as "frenemies." "On some issues, they may be friends, while on others, they may not. We should stop expecting agreement on every point and behave like adults," he said.

HOLY SHIFT

Amritsar Walled City Vendors Moved

AMRITSAR

The Punjab government has started shifting temporary kiosks and street vendors selling liquor, meat, eggs, tobacco, and other non-vegetarian items from the walled city of Amritsar, now declared a holy city. Officials identified around 150 shops and stalls, including meat shops, pan-bidi kiosks, and egg carts, in areas like Old Telephone Exchange near Shastri Market, Katra Jaimal Singh, Hathi Gate, Lohgarh Gate, Hakiman Gate, Bhagtanwala Gate, Guruwali Gate, Guru Bazaar, Lahori Gate, and Namak Mandi.

The Amritsar Hotel and Restaurant Association clarified that licensed hotels and guest houses near the Golden Temple will not be affected as they do not serve liquor or non-vegetarian food. However, illegal liquor sales were

reported in some areas. Local fish trader Yuvraj Singh expressed concern, noting that nearly 60,000 people depend on the fish trade, supplying across Punjab and neighbouring states.

He warned that shifting the market without proper rehabilitation could lead to temporary unemployment and financial losses for restaurants, hotels, and eateries reliant on this supply.

Singh urged the government to prioritise rehabilitation measures. The move follows the Aam Aadmi Party-led government's declaration of parts of Amritsar, Talwindi Sabo, and Sri Anandpur Sahib as holy cities.

Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann announced the decision on December 21, imposing a ban on the sale of meat, fish, alcohol, tobacco, and other intoxicants in these areas.

Officials said the action is part of the state's plan to preserve the sanctity of the walled city and maintain a clean, holy environment for pilgrims and residents alike.

Doctors' Strike Causes Major Disruption At IGMC Hospital

SHIMLA

Patients faced severe hardship at Indira Gandhi Medical College (IGMC), Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, as doctors began a strike on Saturday, disrupting OPD and other hospital services. The strike followed a mass leave by resident doctors on Friday, leaving both outpatients and indoor patients struggling for care.

Visitors reported long waits and limited access to medical attention. Bhawani Dutt, a patient from Karsog in Mandi district, said, "Without doctors, patients are facing severe problems. We humbly request the government and doctors to resolve this matter soon so that patients do not suffer." Ravi Thakur, accompanying a patient from Bali Chowki, added that while his patient was stable, many others were in difficulty due to the shortage of available doctors.

Long-term patient Jiya Lal, from Sunni in Shimla district, emphasised the importance of doctors, saying, "Doctors are like God. They have been very good to me over 15 years of treatment, including surgeries and cancer care. Those who misbehave should be punished, and doctors should be reinstated quickly so patients can get relief."

The strike has caused widespread disruption to healthcare services at IGMC, the state's largest government hospital. OPD services were heavily affected, and many indoor patients could not receive proper treatment. Patients and attendants urged both the state government and striking doctors to resolve the conflict promptly to restore normal functioning.

Kerala Government To Set Minimum Wages Private Hospitals

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala's General Education and Labour Minister V. Sivankutty on Saturday directed the Labour Department to issue a draft notification revising minimum wages for private hospital employees within one month. The directive came during a meeting of the Private Hospital Industrial Relations Committee in Thiruvananthapuram. The decision to issue the notification directly under Section 5(1)(b) of the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, was taken after discussions by the Minimum Wages Committee failed due to non-cooperation from management representatives. A government committee, formed in October 2023, had collected evidence from all 14 districts and conducted several rounds of talks, but agreement could not be reached.

Sivankutty highlighted that most private hospitals still follow the 2013 wage notification, which he said is insufficient for workers to sustain their families.

He emphasised that ensuring better wages is the government's responsibility and that discussions cannot continue indefinitely.

Trade unions had already agreed to a proposal prepared by the department for a 60% wage increase based on the 2013 notification. The Minister assured that the new proposal would not create extra financial burden for hospitals. While issuing the draft notification, the government will consider demands from organisations such as the Indian Association of Physiotherapists, Kerala Private Pharmacists Association, Indian Society of Radiographers and Technologists, and the Indian Speech Language and Hearing Association.

QUICK READ

Tripura Student Fatally Stabbed After Racial Abuse

DEHRADUN

A 24-year-old Tripura student, Angel Chakma, died on Thursday in Dehradun, two weeks after being stabbed for objecting to racial slurs. Angel and his brother were attacked by a group of intoxicated men while shopping on December 9. He sustained serious head and neck injuries and later succumbed in hospital. Police have arrested five suspects, while a Nepali national involved is reportedly on the run. Angel's father, a BSF soldier, has taken the body home for last rites.

Four Family Members Die Sleeping In Closed Room

BIHAR

At least four members of a family, including three children, died of suffocation in Saran district after a fire was lit in a closed room to stay warm. Two other family members were found unconscious and are now receiving treatment at a nearby hospital. Police said lack of oxygen caused the deaths. The victims are believed to be relatives of a UP government official. Authorities have started a full investigation and warned against lighting fires in enclosed spaces.

Delhi Police Arrest Over Thirteen Hundred People

NEW DELHI

Ahead of New Year celebrations, Delhi Police conducted a citywide crackdown, Operation Aaghat 3.0, rounding up 1,306 people. Officers arrested 285 under the Excise, NDPS, and Gambling Acts, detained 504 preventively, and nabbed 116 "bad characters." Seized items included 21 pistols, 20 cartridges, 27 knives, over 12,000 liquor units, 6 kg of ganja, cash, 310 phones, 231 two-wheelers, and a car. A brief gunfight in Narela led to the arrest of two criminals. Authorities aim to ensure public safety during festivities.

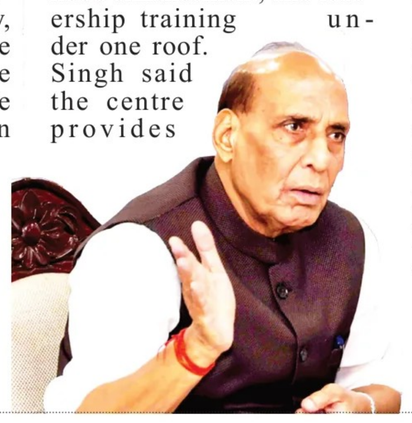
Rajnath Singh Inaugurates Women Centre Empowering Tribals

Rajnath Singh inaugurated the Shrimad Rajchandra Centre of Excellence for Women, promoting skill development and tribal empowerment in Gujarat

VALSAD

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh attended the 25th anniversary celebrations of Shri Rajchandra Mission in Dharmapur, Valsad, on Saturday, where he inaugurated the Shrimad Rajchandra Centre of Excellence for Women. He praised the centre's role in empowering rural and tribal women, especially in South Gujarat. Singh recalled that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had virtually laid the foundation stone of the facility in 2022 and called it a "great fortune" to inaugurate it in person.

Spread across 11 acres, the centre is designed as a comprehensive support hub offering skill development, livelihood enhancement, and leadership training under one roof. Singh said the centre provides women with opportunities ranging from traditional crafts to modern technologies like artificial intelligence, enabling them to become skilled and self-sufficient.



Speaking at the event, he shared his emotional response after interacting with tribal women working at the centre, noting the happiness and confidence on their faces. He highlighted that sustained capacity-building efforts are helping women from rural and tribal communities gain meaningful employment and leadership skills.

The Shrimad Rajchandra Mission, founded on the teachings of spiritual leader Shrimad Rajchandra, marked its silver jubilee with the event. The celebration showcased its expanding social outreach, education, and development initiatives, particularly for women and tribal populations.

Singh emphasised that the centre would continue to play a vital role in uplifting women and strengthening tribal communities in Gujarat. He called it an exemplary model combining skill, livelihood, and leadership development to empower marginalized women and promote inclusive growth in the region.

WB CM Condemns Killing of Worker

KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday strongly condemned the killing of a migrant worker from Murshidabad in Sambalpur, Odisha, following an altercation on December 24. She said the worker, Jewel Rana, was allegedly killed for speaking in Bengali. Banerjee stated that migrant Bengali-speaking families face growing oppression in BJP-ruled states and pledged full support, including economic assistance, to the victim's family.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee condemns the death of a Murshidabad migrant worker in Odisha and promises financial support to the victim's family.

In her statement on X, the Chief Minister said, "No value can compensate human lives, but in cases where deaths occur, we remain committed to financial aid." She also mentioned that West Bengal Police have filed a zero FIR at Suti Police Station, and six people have been arrested. A police team from West Bengal has gone to Odisha to assist the investigation.

According to SDPO Sambalpur Srimanta Barik, the incident happened after an argument over cigarettes between the victim and a group of local men under the influence of alcohol. The fight led to Jewel Rana being hit on the head, which caused fatal injuries. Six men have been arrested, and police are working to apprehend others involved.

Banerjee emphasized that speaking Bengali should not be a crime and called for justice for migrant workers from Murshidabad. She said many migrant workers have returned home terrified from Odisha following this tragic incident.

The Chief Minister assured that the state government will provide all possible help to affected families.

Nepal's Ambassador to India, Shankar Prasad, met Gujarat CM Bhupendra Patel to discuss tourism, trade, and regional devpt cooperation

Nepal Ambassador Meets Gujarat CM To Boost Bilateral Cooperation

GANDHINAGAR

The Ambassador of Nepal to India, Shankar Prasad Sharma, paid a courtesy visit to Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel in Gandhinagar during his trip aimed at promoting Nepal's tourism, according to an official statement. During the meeting, Sharma praised Gujarat's world-class tourism infrastructure developed under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guidance and highlighted its appeal to domestic and international tourists.

The discussions focused on enhancing cooperation in tourism, information technology, hydro energy, manufacturing, and education sectors. Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel explained that Gujarat has grown into a manufacturing hub and is prepared to lead emerging sectors such as semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and global capacity centres. He also highlighted Gujarat's top tourist destinations, including the Statue of Unity, the White Desert, and spiritual sites such as Somnath, Dwarka, and Ambaji, which attract visitors worldwide.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Sanjeev Kumar, Industries Department Principal Secretary Mamta Verma, Industries Commissioner P Swaroop, and members of the Nepalese delegation.

Separately, Ambassador Sharma and his team visited the under-construction international motor bridge at Charchhum in Dharchula, Uttarakhand, along the India-Nepal border. He told that the bridge is nearly complete, and the link road will be finished by the end of December.

The Ambassador emphasised that the bridge will strengthen people-to-people ties, boost trade, tourism, and social interactions, and further cement historic relations between India and Nepal.

He expressed optimism about the bridge's upcoming inauguration and its role in enhancing bilateral connectivity and cooperation between the two countries.

JD-U Demands Probe Over Rabri Devi Residence Shift

NEW DELHI

As Delhi struggles with severe air pollution, experts warn that the toxic environment affects not only physical health but also mental well-being. Children exposed to polluted air face lower IQ levels, memory problems, and a higher risk of developing ADHD. Prolonged exposure is also linked to increased anxiety, depression, disrupted mood regulation, and even neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease. Dr Anchal Miglani, psychiatrist at Emoneeds, said psychiatric impacts of pollution are often overlooked. Children, the elderly, and low-income communities are particularly vulnerable. She noted that high pollution elevates cortisol levels, contributing to chronic stress, while residents report 30-40 per cent higher rates of depression and anxiety than in cleaner cities. Psychologist Fiza Khan added that pollution affects emotional regulation and cognitive functioning.

Toxic Air Is Threat To Mental Health: Experts

NEW DELHI

As Delhi struggles with severe air pollution, experts warn that the toxic environment affects not only physical health but also mental well-being. Children exposed to polluted air face lower IQ levels, memory problems, and a higher risk of developing ADHD. Prolonged exposure is also linked to increased anxiety, depression, disrupted mood regulation, and even neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease.

Dr Anchal Miglani, psychiatrist at Emoneeds, said psychiatric impacts of pollution are often overlooked. Children, the elderly, and low-income communities are particularly vulnerable. She noted that high pollution elevates cortisol levels, contributing to chronic stress, while residents report 30-40 per cent higher rates of depression and anxiety than in cleaner cities. Psychologist Fiza Khan added that pollution affects emotional regulation and cognitive functioning. Grey skies, reduced outdoor activity, and health warnings create chronic stress, affecting social interaction and overall mood. Adults with pre-existing mental health conditions face further challenges.

Dr Jitender Nagpal, paediatrician at Sitaram Bhartia Institute, highlighted that children show attention difficulties, irritability, and poor academic performance due to chronic air pollution. He emphasised that cleaner air and mindful lifestyle choices are essential to safeguard cognitive and emotional well-being.

Dr Deepika Dahima, psychologist at AIIMS, stated that mental health impacts are often ignored in policy responses, which focus only on physical illness. She urged integrating air quality management with mental well-being frameworks, improving green spaces, and controlling emissions to protect cognitive and emotional resilience.

Experts stress that addressing air pollution is crucial not just for lungs, but also for mental health, development, and the future of vulnerable populations.

Seeman Says Political Roots Tamil Soil, Not BJP

CHENNAI

Naam Tamilar Katchi (NTK) leader Seeman on Saturday strongly denied allegations that the BJP nurtured his political career, saying his roots are purely Tamil. Addressing the party's General Council meeting at Thiruverkkadu near Chennai, Seeman said, "Some claim the BJP gave birth to me. I was born of this soil and belong to this land," responding to repeated accusations by leaders including Dalit MP Thol Thirumavalavan.Seeman highlighted that NTK had passed 26 resolutions at the meeting, including adding "Tamil Nadu" to State Transport Corporation names, implementing total prohibition, and seeking NEET exemption. He said these measures reflect people's real aspirations, not political opportunism. He said NTK was formed to act and solve problems, not merely listen. He criticised mainstream parties for making empty promises, asking, "You ruled the state and sat in opposition. What were you doing all these years?" Seeman reiterated his party aims to win all 234 Assembly seats and establish governance based on justice and dignity. He emphasised sustainable employment over welfare giveaways, questioning spending on consumer goods instead of making nurses, cleaners, and teachers permanent employees. He said real empowerment lies in providing jobs and dignity of labour. Responding to claims that he is backed by BJP or RSS, Seeman called such labels baseless, noting that NTK is funded by public contributions and not corporate or political entities. He concluded by reaffirming NTK's commitment to a governance model rooted in Tamil identity, self-respect, and self-reliance, rejecting attempts to discredit the party or its leadership.

Bastar Records Historic Progress In Security And Development

BASTAR

The Bastar Range in Chhattisgarh achieved historic progress in 2025, marking major improvements in security, peace, and development, said IG P Sundarraj. Precise intelligence-based anti-Maoist operations led to the dismantling of top Maoist leadership, large-scale recovery of weapons, and the surrender and rehabilitation of senior cadres, laying a strong foundation for lasting peace.

IG Sundarraj highlighted that the strengthened security environment positively impacted public welfare and development. Roads, communication networks, healthcare, and education services were expanded, while government welfare schemes reached remote areas effectively. The police-public partnership, dialogue, and trust-building reinforced social harmony, helping Bastar move from fear and insecurity to confidence and progress.

He said Bastar's focus in 2026 under the 'Sankalp 2026' initiative will be on eliminating remaining Maoist networks, maintaining robust security, and continuing rehabilitation of citizens affected by Naxalite violence. Efforts will ensure integration of youth and other affected individuals into mainstream development in a humane and inclusive manner.

Equal priority will be given to security, development, and trust-building. Coordination with local administration and stakeholders will aim for last-mile delivery of welfare schemes, infrastructure expansion, and improved opportunities in education, healthcare, and employment.

IG Sundarraj concluded that through sustained strategies and police-public cooperation, Bastar is set to leave behind its legacy of conflict and emerge as a symbol of peace, trust, and progress.

BJP Continues Celebrations Over Bihar Poll Victory

PATNA

Even more than a month after the 2025 Bihar Assembly election results, BJP celebrations continue across the state. On Saturday, Begusarai district witnessed a grand victory event where senior leaders and party workers marked the NDA's win with music, dance, and festive cheer.

Union Minister Giriraj Singh and Bihar Assembly Speaker Dr. Prem Kumar joined the celebrations, waving handkerchiefs and dancing along with party workers. The popular Bhojpuri song "Jodi Modi Nitish Ke Hit Ho Gayil" added to the lively atmosphere.

Workers near the stage enthusiastically joined the leaders, turning the gathering into a vibrant celebration. Addressing the crowd, Dr. Prem Kumar expressed confidence that BJP's success would extend beyond Bihar. He claimed public trust in West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is declining and predicted a BJP government there under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He also spoke about the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise, stating illegal Bangladeshi nationals would be identified and removed in upcoming elections.

PENSION REDRESSAL

Pension Adalat Resolves Hundreds Of Long Grievances

NEW DELHI

The 15th Pension Adalat, held on December 24 at the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), addressed 1,087 long-pending pension grievances across 30 departments and ministries. Out of these, 815 grievances were resolved on the spot, highlighting the efficiency of the initiative in delivering timely justice to pensioners, according to the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions. The grievances involved multiple departments,

including Defence, Home Affairs, Finance, Posts, Housing and Urban Affairs, and Civil Aviation. Pensioners joined the Adalat through video conferencing to voice their concerns directly to authorities.

One such case was of Satyam Mishra from Prayagraj, whose grievance about non-release of Extra Ordinary Pension since July 2024 had been pending for over 114 days. During the Adalat, officers from BSF informed that his case had been settled, and arrears of Rs 5,73,728, including ex-gratia, were paid. His pension will now start from December 1, 2025.

Another case involved Nasim Akhtar from Srinagar, whose family pension grievance had been pending since August 2020 under the Department of Census Operations. The Adalat resolved the delay, and arrears will be cleared without further delay.

Mukta Chakraborty from Guwahati, Assam, had a grievance pending since October 2020 regarding family pension for her unmarried daughter. During the Adalat, authorities were requested to review and follow up her case within ten days for early resolution.

The Pension Adalat continues to serve as a vital platform for pensioners to seek redressal of long-standing issues efficiently, ensuring transparency, accountability, and prompt settlement of pending grievances across central government departments.

QUICK READ

Five injured after shooting in Northwest, DC

Washington DC

Five men were injured in a shooting in Northwest Washington DC on Friday night. Police said all victims are conscious and breathing and have been taken to nearby hospitals. The incident happened near 5th and N Street, and authorities have issued a lookout for multiple suspects who fled in a dark-colored four-door sedan. The DC Police Department confirmed investigations are ongoing and urged anyone with information to come forward. Further details are awaited as the case develops.

UAE praises Saudi efforts for promoting stability in Yemen

Abu Dhabi

The United Arab Emirates welcomed Saudi Arabia's efforts to promote security and stability in Yemen. The UAE praised the Kingdom's positive role in supporting the Yemeni people and their aspirations for peace and prosperity. It also reaffirmed its commitment to backing initiatives that strengthen Yemen's stability and development. Both nations aim to contribute to regional security and growth, ensuring a peaceful and prosperous future for Yemen. The UAE emphasized continued cooperation in these efforts.

Man arrested after Yokohama factory attack

Shizuoka

A 38-year-old man, Masaki Oyama, was arrested for stabbing 15 employees at Yokohama Rubber's Mishima Plant on Friday afternoon. Oyama, a former factory worker, reportedly used a survival knife and dispersed a liquid inside the facility. Eight men suffered stab wounds, while seven others were possibly affected by the liquid; all are conscious in hospital. Authorities confirmed Oyama's previous employment at the plant. Investigations are ongoing. The incident highlights that isolated violent attacks continue in Japan despite low overall crime rates.

Trump plans talks with Putin before meeting Zelenskyy

Trump last spoke with Putin in October; meanwhile, Kyiv faced missile attacks ahead of peace talks with Zelenskyy

WASHINGTON DC

US President Donald Trump signaled he plans to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin soon, ahead of his scheduled meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Florida on Sunday, as international efforts to end the war continue.

Trump expressed confidence about his talks with Putin, saying, "I think it's going to go good with him" and that he expects discussions "soon, as much as I want." He also stated that any peace agreement between Ukraine and Russia would require his approval.

Zelenskyy confirmed his meeting with Trump, noting that it could help move peace talks forward, though no immediate agreement is expected. The Ukrainian leader said the 20-point peace plan prepared by US and Ukrainian officials is almost complete and that discussions would focus on long-term security guarantees and the role of allies in post-war stability.

The last phone call between Trump and Putin was in October, lasting over two hours, which the White House described as "very good and productive," covering various issues including Gaza ceasefire efforts. Earlier this month, Putin's adviser Yury Ushakov held nearly five hours of talks with US representatives Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner on advancing Ukraine peace negotiations.

Meanwhile, Kyiv faced a major missile and drone attack on December 27, just a day before the Trump-Zelenskyy meeting. Multiple Kinzhal, Iskander, and Kalibr missiles struck the city, prompting Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko to urge residents to stay in shelters. Authorities said air defence forces were actively responding to the attacks.

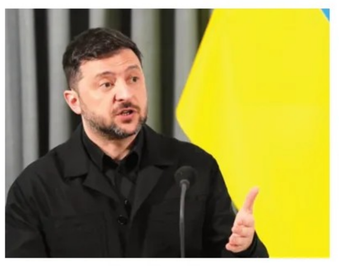
As tensions remain high, the upcoming meetings between Trump, Zelenskyy, and potentially Putin are seen as crucial steps in ongoing international efforts to achieve a lasting resolution to the conflict.

Zelenskyy accuses Belarus of aiding Russian drone attacks

KYIV

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Belarus of surrendering its sovereignty to Russia's aggressive ambitions, citing its use of Belarusian territory for drone attacks on Ukraine. Speaking in a staff meeting, Zelenskyy highlighted Russian Shahed drones being launched from Belarus, with equipment reportedly mounted on residential buildings near the border, endangering civilians. He called on Minsk to stop these "games" and emphasized the need to inform international partners and prepare joint responses.

Zelenskyy also addressed strengthening Ukraine's drone and air defense capabilities. He instructed the First Deputy Prime Minister, the Defense Minister, and the Unmanned Systems Forces command to modernize drone distribution, ensuring troops receive sufficient supplies. Additionally, he tasked the General Staff and Ministry of Defense to update Ukraine's air defense strategy, focusing on infrastructure protection and frontline defense.



The accusations coincide with reports that Russia is stationing nuclear-capable Oreshnik missiles in eastern Belarus, potentially enhancing its strike reach across Europe. Zelenskyy's statements reflect growing concern over Belarusian involvement in Russia's military operations and the increasing risk to civilians.

Zelenskyy accuses Belarus of aiding Russian drone attacks, urging partners to respond and improve Ukraine's air defense amid escalating regional tensions

Amid these developments, Zelenskyy continues high-stakes diplomacy to end the nearly four-year war. He is scheduled to meet US President Donald Trump in Florida on Sunday, December 28, 2025. Their discussions are expected to focus on a 20-point peace plan and possible US security guarantees for Ukraine.

Syria vows to fight terrorism, support victims, while international and local efforts focus on justice and preventing future attacks

UN Chief condemns deadly Syrian mosque terror attack

GENEVA

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Saturday strongly condemned the terrorist attack at the Ali Bin Abi Talib Mosque in Homs, Syria, during Friday prayers, offering condolences to the families of the victims and wishing the injured a speedy recovery. Guterres described attacks against civilians and places of worship as "unacceptable" in a post on X.

The blast killed at least eight people and injured 18 others. Victims were moved to Karam al-Louz Hospital in Homs for treatment. Initial investigations indicate that explosive devices were planted inside the mosque, authorities said.

Syrian Interior Ministry units quickly secured the site and established a cordon while collecting evidence to identify those responsible. The Syrian Foreign Ministry strongly condemned the attack, calling it a cowardly act aimed at destabilising the country and undermining its people's resilience.

The Ministry reaffirmed Syria's determination to fight terrorism in all its forms and promised that perpetrators would be held accountable. It expressed deepest condolences to the victims' families and full solidarity with the Syrian people.

The attack, which occurred during the Friday prayer, has shocked both local communities and the international community, highlighting the ongoing security challenges in Syria. Guterres's statement reflects the UN's continued commitment to protecting civilians and safeguarding places of worship worldwide.

Authorities in Homs continue their investigation to ensure justice is served, while efforts to strengthen security and prevent future attacks remain a priority in the region.

Afridi slams govt for 'undemocratic' curbs on PTI activities

ISLAMABAD

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi on Friday criticised the Punjab government for obstructing Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) activities during his three-day visit to Lahore, alleging harassment of party leaders and workers by provincial police. He said his convoy faced restrictions, barriers were placed at key locations, and hundreds of PTI workers were stopped at Chakri and Bhera from joining him. Afridi described the situation as "undemocratic" and likened it to "martial law-like conditions," claiming police allowed only pre-approved individuals into the Punjab Assembly and harassed party members at Liberty Roundabout. He accused the PML-N-led Punjab government of creating inter-provincial friction and undermining democratic processes. Afridi also criticised the federal government over economic mismanagement, alleging declining industrial growth, the undervalued sale of PIA, and large-scale youth emigration. Despite obstacles, he continued meetings with PTI leaders and confirmed he would stay in Lahore until Sunday.

Rising living costs challenge Pak's claimed economic stability

LAHORE

Despite government claims of economic stability, millions of Pakistanis continue to face rising living costs, making daily survival increasingly difficult across the country. While official data suggests inflation has eased, market realities tell a different story, especially for essential goods such as food, fuel, and utilities.

Authorities have cited a drop in headline inflation to around 7.4 per cent as proof of recovery. However, persistent currency depreciation, high fuel prices, and climate-related supply disruptions continue to push prices upward, undermining government assurances. Although public sector employees received a 10 per cent salary increase, critics argue the relief has had minimal impact.

Nearly 40 per cent of Pakistan's population still lives in extreme poverty, with another 40 per cent barely above the poverty line. With per capita income around $4 per day, household budgets remain under severe pressure. Government worker Muhammad Saleem said the pay hike does little to cover rising expenses, while homemaker Kiran Ejaz noted that even PKR 1,500 a day is insufficient to feed a family. Private-sector workers and daily wage earners have received no support.

Economist Dr Qais Aslam explained that supply chain disruptions, rising import costs, climate shocks, and reduced agricultural output are driving persistent price pressures. He added that a slowdown in inflation only means prices rise more slowly, not that they are falling.

Recent 2025 data shows sharp increases in vegetables, pulses, and fruits, making basic foods unaffordable for many. Staples like lentils, onions, and tomatoes have surged, while fruits have largely become a luxury for middle-income families, reflecting the ongoing struggle against rising living costs despite official claims of economic stability.

Russian official claims Ukraine proposed different peace plan

MOSCOW

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said on Friday that Ukraine's proposed peace plan differs significantly from the one Moscow and Washington are negotiating. He noted that while a settlement appeared close, the process has been hindered by imposed deadlines and efforts to disrupt negotiations.

Speaking on the programme "60 Minutes," Ryabkov said, "I believe Dec. 25, 2025, will remain in our memory as a milestone when we truly approached a solution, but whether we can make the final push and reach an agreement depends on the political will of the other side."

Ryabkov also criticised comments by US Permanent Representative to NATO Matthew Whitaker, who suggested ending the conflict within 90 days, saying fixed deadlines do not help achieve peace.

Islamabad landowners protest CDA's built-up property awards

ISLAMABAD

Hundreds of landowners from Islamabad's C-16 and H-16 sectors staged a protest against the Capital Development Authority's (CDA) recently announced Built-Up Property (BuP) awards, calling them unfair and out of touch with current realities. The demonstration erupted after reports that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif might inaugurate the Jinnah Medical Complex and Daanish University in H-16, mobilising affected residents to voice years of grievances.

Protesters argued that, unlike previous sectors such as C-13, C-14, and C-15, where BuP awards were granted based on existing structures, the CDA relied on outdated 2008 satellite imagery to determine compensation. They said this approach ignores families' growth and additional construction over the past decade. Under the 2008-09 land acquisition policy, landowners were promised one kanal of developed land for every four kanals acquired, plus a five-marla plot for every 300 square feet of constructed area.

"This is a clear injustice," said protester Asim Mahmood, noting that delayed BuP announcements have left families uncertain and deprived them of fair compensation. He also criticised CDA for selling acquired land at much higher prices than originally paid to landowners. Representatives of the Affected Persons Alliance demanded immediate withdrawal of the new BuP notifications and reassessment of compensation at current market rates, warning of further protests if their demands are ignored. CDA spokesperson Shahid Kiani defended the authority, saying any construction after 2008 was illegal and ineligible for compensation, based on satellite imagery from SUPARCO.

China tightens control following Tibetan leader detention

DHARAMSHALA

Chinese authorities have intensified control over Tibetan communities in Amdo Gulog following the December 4 detention of prominent Buddhist leader Chogtrul Dorje Tenzin without charges. Officials imposed compulsory governance meetings and reinforced a rural credit score system tying benefits to political loyalty. Critics say the system coerces obedience, undermines religious authority, restricts community autonomy, and has heightened fear, drawing growing international human rights concern.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

	9			5	6			4
	5		8			6		9
1		6		9		5		3
5			6		7	9	3	
3	1		4				6	
	7			1	3	8		2
8		1	9		2		5	
	3			4		2		6
	2		7		5	3		8

2	8	3	7	6	9	1	5	4
5	1	9	3	4	2	7	8	6
4	7	6	1	8	5	9	3	2
1	5	2	6	9	8	4	7	3
9	4	7	5	2	3	8	6	1
3	6	8	4	7	1	2	9	5
6	2	4	9	5	7	3	1	8
8	9	1	2	3	6	5	4	7
7	3	5	8	1	4	6	2	9

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

WOMEN SUPPORT

India opens OSCW for distressed women in Canada

TORONTO

For Indian women moving to Canada, new challenges can arise, especially when facing domestic violence, abuse, or legal issues in unfamiliar surroundings. To support those in distress, the Consulate General of India in Toronto has officially launched the One Stop Centre for Women (OSCW).

The Centre provides immediate assistance through counselling, psychosocial support, and coordination of legal advice. It also helps women access community and social service resources in Canada. The OSCW operates under Canadian laws, ensuring safe, legal, and dignified support.

A woman Centre Administrator will oversee all services, including handling distress calls via a 24X7 helpline. Counselling and emotional support will be provided through partnered NGOs, while financial assistance will be given on a means-tested basis, following Government of India rules. The Centre can be contacted at +1 (437) 552 3309 or via email at osc.torontomea.gov.in.

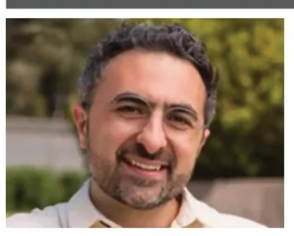
सत्यमेव जयते

Consulate General of India Toronto

This initiative strengthens the Consulate's existing services, which include passport, visa, OCI, police clearance, and other consular support. The OSCW acts as a bridge for women in crisis, connecting immediate aid with long-term stability. The Centre prioritizes empathy and understanding, ensuring that Indian women abroad have a safe space to seek help. By offering emotional, legal, and financial support, the OSCW empowers women to navigate challenges confidently, promoting safety and well-being within the diaspora community.

This service is exclusively available for Indian passport holders, reflecting the Consulate's commitment to proactive, beneficiary-focused diplomacy and support for women facing vulnerability abroad.

QUICK READ



AI Race Will Cost Hundreds Of Billions

San Francisco

Microsoft AI chief Mustafa Suleyman has warned that the next phase of artificial intelligence will bring huge financial, ethical and social challenges. He said companies may need to spend hundreds of billions of dollars over the next five to ten years to stay competitive. Suleyman said most money would go into infrastructure, special hardware and hiring top talent. He urged firms not to chase artificial general intelligence blindly and said Microsoft would quit projects that risk unsafe, uncontrollable AI.

Ease Of Doing Business Key To Customs Trade

New Delhi

Government officials on Saturday said ease of doing business is a continuous process that needs strong coordination among Customs, partner agencies and the trading community. Speaking at the Customs Clearance Facilitation Committee meeting, stakeholders discussed key operational issues and suggested practical solutions to improve efficiency. Officials said the outcomes would strengthen trade facilitation and boost confidence in the EXIM sector. Representatives from agencies like FSSAI and trade bodies participated, highlighting the collaborative approach to smoother Customs clearance processes.

CIMSME HONOURS MSME BANKING CHAMPIONS

Gupta said CIMSME has honoured banks since 2013, and the book simplifies schemes

NEW DELHI

The Chamber of Indian Micro Small and Medium Enterprises hosted a major event celebrating banks supporting MSMEs nationwide.

The Chamber of Indian Micro Small and Medium Enterprises on Saturday hosted the 13th MSME Banking Excellence Awards 2025 in New Delhi, recognising banks and institutions supporting small businesses. The event, held at The Lalit, was organised in collaboration with Ageas Federal Life Insurance and also saw the launch of a new book on MSMEs. Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal attended as chief guest and presented awards to top performing banks and financial institutions.

Dr Rajneesh, IAS, Additional Secretary and Development Commissioner in the MSME Ministry, was the guest of honour. During the ceremony, the book titled "MSMEs of Developed India – An Encyclopaedia of MSME Schemes" was launched. The book is authored by CA Mukesh Mohan Gupta, President of CIMSME, and published by Bharat Law House.

CIMSME Honours
MSME Banking Champions and Launches 'MSMEs of Developed India'
-Authored by The President MUKESH MOHAN GUPTA
Union Minister Piyush Goyal Releasing the Book "MSMEs Of Developed India" authored by Mukesh Mohan Gupta
Piyush Goyal, Dr Rajneesh, Adl. Secretary MSME and Mukesh Mohan Gupta, President CIMSME lighting Lamps
Presenting CIMSME's MSME Banking Excellence Awards
The MSME Banking Excellence Awards are aimed at strengthening the MSME ecosystem by recognizing institutions that enable enterprise growth. The book 'MSMEs Of Developed India' further reinforces our commitment to documenting and showcasing the transformative journey of Indian MSMEs while encouraging collaboration between industry, finance, and government
Mr. Mukesh Mohan Gupta
President, CIMSME, and Author of the book MSMEs Of Developed India

Speaking at the event, Goyal said access to timely bank credit has played a vital role in the growth of micro, small and medium enterprises. He said banks have helped small entrepreneurs shift away from informal lending and expand their businesses. He added that public sector banks now compete strongly with private and foreign banks in supporting India's growth.

Congratulating the awardees, Goyal said MSMEs, startups and young entrepreneurs would keep getting strong backing from banks and government schemes during the Amrit Kaal. Gupta said CIMSME has honoured banks since 2013 and the book presents central schemes simply. Over 50 MSMEs received Ratna Awards, while Ageas Federal Life Insurance reaffirmed its focus on inclusive, long-term growth.

NCH Enables ₹45 Cr Consumer Refunds

NEW DELHI

The National Consumer Helpline has helped secure refunds worth ₹ 45 crore across 31 sectors over the past eight months, officials said on Saturday. Around 67,000 refund-related complaints were resolved during the period. The e-commerce sector topped the list, accounting for nearly ₹ 32 crore in refunds. Travel and tourism followed with ₹ 3.5 crore. The helpline, run by the Department of Consumer Affairs, provides quick and low-cost dispute resolution before cases reach courts.

India's economy is set to improve next year, aided by strong domestic demand, lower inflation and sectoral recovery

India GDP Seen At 7.4 Pc FY26 Growth

NEW DELHI

India's real gross domestic product is projected to grow by 7.4 per cent in FY26, compared to 6.5 per cent in FY25, according to a report by ICRA. The improvement is expected to be driven by a seasonal pick up in electricity demand, mining activity and construction work after weather related disruptions ease.

The report said growth may slow to below 7 per cent in the second half of FY26 from nearly 8 per cent in the first half due to a high base effect and softer export performance. It expects the Reserve Bank of India to keep interest rates unchanged during the February policy review, with future actions depending on inflation trends and the FY27 Union Budget.

Economic activity remained healthy in the third quarter of FY26, helped by festive demand and the impact of GST rate cuts. ICRA said consumption of goods and services, along with manufacturing volumes, benefited during the quarter, though export weakness could increase later unless a trade deal with the US is finalised.

The report forecast consumer price inflation to fall sharply to 2 per cent in FY26 from 4.6 per cent in FY25, while wholesale price inflation is seen at 0.4 per cent. CPI rose to 0.7 per cent in November 2025 due to reduced deflation in food items.

Mining, construction and electricity demand are expected to recover in coming months. Cement output may grow 6.5 to 7.5 per cent, steel demand 7 to 8 per cent, and electricity demand 1.5 to 2 per cent in FY26.

ICRA also warned of risks from global policy shifts, export weakness, monsoon uncertainty, fiscal limits and commodity price pressures.

Indian Dairy Sector Faces Tight Supply Pressure

NEW DELHI

India's dairy industry is entering a phase of tighter supply and margin adjustments after three years of disruption, surplus, and recovery, according to a Systematix Institutional Equities report. Post-COVID price declines in 2022-23 forced farmers to reduce cattle induction, causing milk output to drop sharply.

From mid-2023, initiatives by cooperatives and private players, including sustainable fodder programs, revived supply. This led to a 25 per cent surge in milk production during the October 2024-March 2025 flush season, creating a temporary surplus. Dairy firms expanded value-added products, strengthened cold chains, invested in backend operations, and increased promotions to manage excess supply.

However, in 2025, early rains and geopolitical disturbances in northern milk belts—including Punjab, Haryana, and Jammu and Kashmir—disrupted the supply-demand balance. Strong festive demand further eroded inventories, leaving limited surplus heading into late 2025. Milk procurement costs rose, though product prices largely stayed stable after the GST cut, with regional increases of Rs 1-1.5 per litre reported in states like Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. Companies expect cost adjustments around April 2026 during the Ramzan period.

Systematix highlighted robust demand supported by lower prices and increased grammage, particularly in small units, but margins remain pressured by channel and supply-chain costs. Firms are considering selective price hikes or reducing volumes to restore profitability.

The report also noted structural trends: growing demand for value-added products such as curd, paneer, ghee, and ice cream, with ice cream sales spreading beyond summer months. Distribution is shifting toward quick-commerce and e-commerce platforms, while general trade loses share. Modern trade offers visibility but lower margins, prompting dairy players to make careful decisions in balancing growth and profitability.

SIP inflows cross ₹3L cr amid rising investor confidence

NEW DELHI

Investors have poured more than Rs three lakh crore into mutual fund schemes through systematic investment plans in 2025, marking the first time such inflows crossed this level in a calendar year, according to industry data.

Data from the Association of Mutual Funds in India showed SIP inflows reached Rs 3.04 trillion, rising from Rs 2.69 trillion recorded in 2024. The steady rise reflects growing investor preference for disciplined and regular investments amid market volatility during the year.

The increase in SIP investments helped offset a decline in lump sum investments. Lump sum inflows into active equity schemes fell to Rs 3.9 trillion by October 2025, compared with Rs 5.9 trillion a year earlier. In contrast, SIP investments into active equity schemes rose three per cent to Rs 2.3 trillion during the same period.

AMFI chief executive Venkat Chalasani said SIPs have become India's preferred long term wealth building habit, helping investors stay disciplined during market swings. SIPs accounted for 37 per cent of gross inflows into active equity schemes in the first ten months of 2025, up from 27 per cent last year.

SIP inflows in November remained largely stable at Rs 29,445 crore, slightly lower than October's Rs 29,529 crore. Despite the marginal dip, overall participation in mutual funds stayed strong.

Net equity inflows rose to Rs 29,894 crore in November from Rs 24,671 crore in October. Total assets under management also increased to Rs 80.80 lakh crore, reflecting continued confidence among retail investors, market experts said. They highlighted strong domestic liquidity and long term optimism about India's economic growth and corporate earnings outlook ahead nationwide.

Silver Soars Globally, Hits Record Highs

CHENNAI

Silver prices surged over the weekend to record highs globally and in India, driven by strong industrial demand, investment inflows, and supply constraints. On the US COMEX, March 2026 silver futures rose to $79.70 per ounce, nearly 190% above last year's low. In India, MCX silver futures touched ₹2,39,397 per kg, aided by global momentum and a weaker rupee. Experts attribute the rally to a structural supply-demand imbalance, as demand from renewable energy, electronics, electric vehicles, and advanced manufacturing accelerates while production remains constrained.

MCX prices jumped nearly ₹30,000 in a week, with support at ₹2,20,000–₹2,23,000, said R Ponmudi of Enrich Money, adding that prices could test ₹2,50,000–₹2,60,000 if levels above ₹2,40,000 sustain. Expectations of easier global monetary policy, geopolitical uncertainty, and safe-haven demand further boosted prices.

DMart Expands Stores Amid Digital Competition

DMart bets on aggressive store expansion for future profits, while JioMart and Blinkit lead weekly user growth in India's fast-changing retail market

NEW DELHI

Indian retail giant DMart is focusing on long-term growth by rapidly expanding its store network, even though this strategy may delay strong cash flow in the short term. DMart plans to grow its store base by 15–20 percent annually, a pace typical for large retailers during their early expansion years.

The company's management has visibility for up to 2,200 stores. With so many projects underway, DMart's near-term free cash flow is expected to remain negative or minimal. However, global examples like Walmart and Costco show that once expansion slows, cash balances can turn strongly positive.

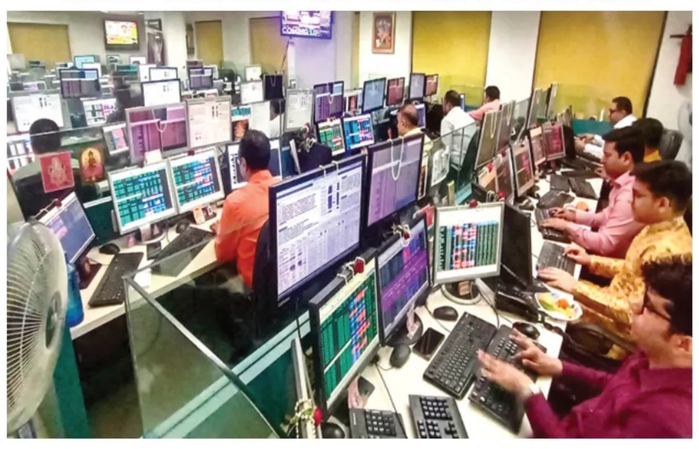
To strengthen its position, DMart is also expanding private-label products. These items are priced 40–50 percent lower than popular brands, sometimes costing only one-third as much. This strategy helps attract price-sensitive customers and builds brand loyalty.

While quick commerce apps are gaining popularity for fast deliveries, CLSA predicts they will account for less than 20 percent of urban consumption by 2035. This leaves significant demand for physical stores like DMart to serve.

In the digital space, the report highlights weekly app usage. For the week ending December 8, JioMart recorded the highest rise in active users, followed by Blinkit. Meesho also grew its user base to 169.8 million, while most other e-commerce platforms saw declines.

Competition remains strong in food and grocery delivery. Zomato and Swiggy dominate food delivery, while Blinkit, Zepto, and Swiggy Instamart compete in quick commerce. Despite this digital surge, DMart continues to bet on physical expansion to secure future profits.

Indian ETF assets cross ₹10 lakh cr milestone



NEW DELHI

India's exchange traded fund industry has crossed a major milestone, with assets under management exceeding Rs 10 lakh crore as of October 2025, according to Zerodha Fund House. The sector has doubled its asset base over the last three years, showing a clear shift towards low cost and transparent investment options.

Zerodha Fund House said ETF trading activity has risen sharply in recent years. Trading volumes jumped more than seven times, from Rs 51,000 crore in 2019-20 to Rs 3.83 lakh crore in 2024-25. The strong momentum continued in the current financial year, with volumes crossing Rs 3.2 lakh crore in the first half of 2025-26 alone.

Higher liquidity has helped improve price discovery, tighten spreads and allow smoother trade execution for investors. Retail participation has played a major role in this growth. The number of ETF investor accounts increased over eight times in five years, rising from about 41 lakh folios in November 2020 to more than three crore folios by November 2025.

Vaibhav Jalan of Zerodha Fund House said ETFs offer simple, cost effective exposure across asset classes and themes, making them suitable for new investors. Equity ETFs remain the largest segment, adding 25 lakh new folios in the past year.

However, investors are slowly diversifying. Gold and silver ETFs now form nearly 15 per cent of total ETF assets. Gold ETF assets doubled to over Rs 1 lakh crore, while silver ETF assets rose four times to more than Rs 49,000 crore, highlighting growing interest in diversification.

COAL REFORM

Government Simplifies Coal Mine Approval Rules

NEW DELHI

The central government has introduced new rules to make coal mining faster and more efficient. On Friday, the Centre announced that coal companies will no longer need approval from the Coal Controller Organisation (CCO) to open new mines, individual seams, or sections of seams.

Instead, the authority to grant such permissions has been given to the boards of the respective coal companies. This change also applies to mines that have been closed for 180 days or more and are seeking to restart operations.

However, the new rules clearly state that company boards can only approve openings after securing all necessary clearances from central or state governments and other statutory bodies. Additionally, boards must still submit details of mine openings to the CCO for record purposes.

The Coal Ministry clarified that while coal companies now enjoy greater autonomy, approval from the CCO will remain mandatory for entities outside the coal sector. This ensures that regulatory oversight continues, even as operational decisions are delegated.

In its statement, the ministry described the reform as a balanced step that empowers company boards while maintaining safeguards. By removing the extra approval layer, the government expects coal companies to save up to two months in the process of operationalising mines.

This time-saving measure is expected to boost coal production and improve efficiency in the sector. Faster approvals mean companies can bring mines into operation more quickly, helping meet India's growing energy needs.

The move reflects the government's broader push to streamline procedures and encourage higher output in critical industries. With coal remaining a key source of power in India, these reforms are seen as vital for ensuring energy security and supporting economic growth.

ENGLAND end long Australian Test win drought

Australia lead WTC despite England Melbourne upset

England stunned Australia with a four wicket Boxing Day Test win at the MCG, ending a long wait for success on Australian soil. Although Australia had already sealed the Ashes, the loss affected the World Test Championship race. Australia remain top with 85.71 points percentage. New Zealand and South Africa moved closer with 77.78 and 75 percent. England earned twelve points but stay seventh with 35.18. India sit sixth. The final Test begins January 4 in Sydney, where Australia seek recovery and England chase momentum. Fans expect fierce competition as WTC standings remain tight throughout the season.

Australia dominated day one, but England rallied as Australia collapsed, leaving England chasing 175 after dramatic reversals overall

MELBOURNE

England finally tasted Test success in Australia after nearly fifteen years as they beat the hosts by four wickets in the fourth Ashes Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. The fast moving Boxing Day match ended early on the second day, giving England a rare reason to celebrate on tough Australian soil.

The pitch helped fast bowlers throughout the game and no spinner bowled a single over. England chose to bowl first after winning the toss, trusting the green surface. The move worked instantly as Josh Tongue ripped through the Australian batting with five wickets, dismissing the home side for just 152.

Australia hit back strongly with the ball. England collapsed for 110, trailing by 42 runs after the first innings. Michael Neser took four wickets while Scott Boland added three. By the end of day one, Australia looked in control with all ten wickets intact in their second innings.

Day two brought a sharp turnaround. Travis Head played positively and reached 46 before Brydon Carse bowled him, sparking a dramatic collapse. Australia were bowled out for 132, with stand in captain Steve Smith unbeaten on 24, leaving England a target of 175. England chased with confidence. Ben Duckett and Zak Crawley attacked from the start, scoring quickly and easing pressure. Duckett made 34 from 26 balls while Crawley struck 37. Though Australia removed Joe Root and Ben Stokes briefly, Jacob Bethell's calm 40 and Harry Brook's unbeaten 18 guided England to victory. This was England's first Test win in Australia since 2011. The final Test will be played in Sydney on January 4 after losing the opening three matches.

Ujjain seers warn IPL over Bangladeshi player

UJJAIN

Religious leaders in Ujjain have warned that they may disrupt Indian Premier League matches if Bangladeshi fast bowler Mustafizur Rahman is allowed to play. The warning comes amid rising anger over recent attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh.

Mahavir Nath, chief priest of the Rinmukteshwar Mahadev Temple, said groups of seers would protest inside stadiums if the player appears. Other religious bodies supported the stand, saying authorities should first address concerns of minority safety before welcoming foreign players.

The issue grew after Kolkata Knight Riders bought Rahman for Rs 9.20 crore in the IPL auction. Online campaigns have since urged fans to boycott the team, claiming the decision hurts religious sentiments during a tense period.

Tension increased after reports of two Hindu men being killed in Bangladesh this month following local disputes and allegations. Bangladeshi officials said arrests were made and called the incidents isolated, while promising action against those responsible.

Spiritual leader Dhirendra Shastri also condemned the violence during a visit to Raipur. He urged the Indian government to raise the issue strongly and offer help to threatened minorities.

The developments have added strain to India Bangladesh relations, with protests held in India and diplomatic concern expressed over minority safety. Officials continue talks as cricket season.

Michigan appoints Whittingham after Moore's sudden exit

ANN ARBOR

The University of Michigan has appointed veteran coach Kyle Whittingham as its new head football coach, ending a turbulent period following the firing of Sherrone Moore. The decision was announced, with Whittingham signing a five year contract to take charge of the storied program.

Michigan athletic director Warde Manuel praised Whittingham's leadership and experience, calling him a coach known for strong values, discipline and the ability to build winning teams. The 66 year old brings decades of coaching experience and a reputation for steady leadership at the highest level of college football. Whittingham recently stepped away from Utah after 21 successful seasons, during which he became the most successful coach in the school's history with 177 wins. Though he announced his departure earlier this month, Whittingham made it clear it was not a retirement. Michigan moved quickly to secure his services as the program looked for stability.

Sherrone Moore was dismissed on December 10 after an internal investigation found he had an inappropriate relationship with a staff member.

Concerns rise over PBKS spin backup depth

NEW DELHI

Former India cricketer Abhinav Mukund has raised concerns over Punjab Kings' spin bowling resources ahead of the Indian Premier League 2026, stating that the franchise lacks strong backup options for senior spinner Yuzvendra Chahal.

Punjab Kings made a few targeted additions during the mini auction, picking up domestic players Vishnu Vinod and Praveen Dubey, along with Australian all rounder Cooper Connolly to strengthen their middle order. Mukund praised the overall balance of the squad but felt spin depth remains an area of worry.

According to Mukund, Punjab Kings entered the auction with most positions already settled due to earlier investments. However, uncertainty around Chahal's availability and workload could create problems. He pointed out that Chahal did not feature in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, making it difficult to assess the team's cover if the lead spinner is unavailable. While Praveen Dubey has been added as a leg spinner, Mukund suggested the options may still be limited in pressure situations.

Mukund also highlighted the value Cooper Connolly brings to the side. The young Australian offers flexibility, with the ability to bat anywhere between number three and five, adding balance to the middle order. His presence gives Punjab more combinations, especially on slower pitches.

Vishnu Vinod's signing was another talking point. The wicketkeeper batter has moved across franchises over the years, with limited opportunities despite showing promise. Former India batter Robin Uthappa described Vinod as an exciting talent who deserves a longer run in the IPL. He believes Vinod can add depth to the batting lineup and provide useful options behind the stumps.

As IPL 2026 approaches, Punjab Kings appear well settled in most areas. However, managing their spin resources, especially support for Chahal, could prove crucial in a long and demanding season.

Dorgu strike lifts United into fifth

LONDON

Manchester United returned to the Premier League top five with a narrow but valuable 1–0 victory over Newcastle United at Old Trafford on Saturday, despite being stretched by injuries and absences. A stunning first half volley from Patrick Dorgu proved decisive in a tense contest.

United, missing seven players including captain Bruno Fernandes, showed resilience throughout the match. Dorgu scored the only goal in the 24th minute, reacting quickly to a loose clearance from a long throw.

RENUKA shines as India seal series

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

India fast bowler Renuka Singh made a powerful return to T20 international cricket, producing a match winning spell against Sri Lanka as India clinched the five match series with an eight wicket win in the third T20I at the Greenfield International Stadium.

Playing her first T20I after more than a year, Renuka finished with impressive figures of four wickets for twenty one runs in four overs. Her sharp pace and accuracy broke the Sri Lankan batting order and earned her the Player of the Match award. She had missed India's tour of England earlier in the year and was rested for the opening two games of the series.

Speaking after the match, Renuka said the venue had always brought her success. She described Kerala as her lucky ground, recalling similar four wicket hauls during earlier matches, including her Under 19 days. The pacer said she felt confident returning to a place where she had always enjoyed bowling.

With the Women's T20 World Cup less than six months away, Renuka's performance came at an important time for the Indian team. She said the bowling unit was working well as a group, with pacers and spinners combining effectively. According to her, the focus remains on finding the best team balance and maintaining high standards ahead of the global event.

Renuka has been India's top wicket taker in the last two T20 World Cups and is now working on improving her variations with support from the National Cricket Academy.

India have been drawn in a tough World Cup group, but confidence is growing as preparations continue.

Harmanpreet Hails Deepti's record breaking milestone

NEW DELHI

India captain Harmanpreet Kaur praised Deepti Sharma's historic achievement in world cricket, calling it "total magic" after the star all rounder created a record never seen before in T20 internationals.

Deepti became the first cricketer in the world, across both men's and women's T20Is, to score 1,000 runs and claim 150 wickets. She reached the landmark during the third T20I against Sri Lanka at Thiruvananthapuram, underlining her value as one of the most complete white ball players in the game.

Harmanpreet shared a special message on social media, posting Deepti's image and applauding her achievement. The Indian skipper's words reflected the admiration within the team for Deepti's consistency and match winning ability.

Deepti also moved to the top of the women's T20I wicket takers list. Her three wicket spell helped her reach 151 wickets, drawing level with Australia's Megan Schutt. Her disciplined bowling, along with Renuka Singh's four wicket haul, restricted Sri Lanka to 112 for seven.

India comfortably chased the target, sealing an eight wicket victory and an unassailable 3–0 lead in the five match series. Shafali Verma led the chase with an explosive unbeaten 79, striking boundaries with ease after a cautious beginning. Captain Harmanpreet supported her with a calm 21 not out as India finished the job early.

Deepti's recent success adds to an outstanding year. She was the Player of the Tournament at the 2025 Women's World Cup, finishing as the leading wicket taker and helping India lift their first ever world title at home.

Her growing stature was further confirmed at the Women's Premier League auction, where UP Warriorz signed her for Rs 3.2 crore, the second highest bid in league history, reflecting her immense value in modern cricket.

Women's HIL set for thrilling Ranchi return

RANCHI

The Women's Hockey India League is ready to raise excitement once again as its second season begins in Ranchi from December 28 (today), bringing quality hockey back to the city. After a successful debut season, the league promises faster action, stronger competition and big crowds over the next thirteen days.

All matches will be played at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Astro Turf Hockey Stadium, with four teams fighting for the title. Ranchi Royals, SG Pipers, JSW Soorma Hockey Club and Shrachi Bengal Tigers will compete in a double round robin format, where each side meets the others twice. The top two teams will qualify for the grand final on January 10, 2026. Last season saw Odisha Warriors lift the trophy, while JSW Soorma Hockey Club finished runners up after a close final. This year, Soorma will look to go one step further after topping the league stage previously. Fans can expect exciting performances from Indian stars and international players from countries such as the Netherlands, Australia, Argentina, Belgium, Spain and Great Britain.

Ranchi Royals will aim to use home support to their advantage, while Shrachi Bengal Tigers and SG Pipers hope to improve on their earlier finishes.

Portland controlled early as Deni Avdija starred, building a 12-point third-quarter lead and 71–59 advantage for the hosts

HARDEN, Lopez power Clippers past Portland

PORTLAND

The Los Angeles Clippers continued their strong run of form with a convincing 119–103 win over the Portland Trail Blazers, registering their third straight victory in the NBA. James Harden and Brook Lopez led the charge with dominant scoring displays that turned the game decisively in the visitors' favour.

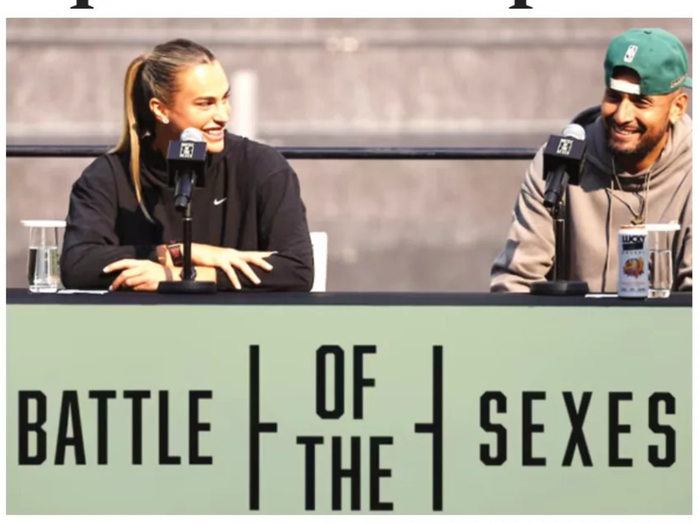
Harden finished with 34 points, combining sharp shooting with aggressive drives, while Brook Lopez added 31 points in a memorable performance that included a career high nine three pointers. Kawhi Leonard played a key supporting role, contributing 28 points, eight rebounds and six assists, with 18 of his points coming in a powerful fourth quarter surge.

Portland started brightly and enjoyed control for much of the first half. Deni Avdija led the Trail Blazers with an all round effort of 27 points, eight rebounds and eight assists, helping the hosts build a lead that reached 12 points in the third quarter. A free throw by Donovan Clingan gave Portland a 71–59 advantage, appearing to put them in a strong position.

However, the game changed dramatically soon after. The Clippers went on a stunning 19–1 run in the third quarter, fueled by Lopez's outside shooting and Harden's composure at the line. Los Angeles outscored Portland 63–41 in the second half, completely shifting momentum. Lopez hit three pointers from all angles, while Harden added a crucial four point play late in the third quarter. Leonard's aggressive drives and a powerful dunk further deflated the home side. Portland struggled to respond as the Clippers tightened their defense and controlled the tempo. By the final quarter, Los Angeles were firmly in command and calmly closed out the contest. The win highlighted the Clippers' growing confidence and balance, as their star players delivered at key moments on the road.

Sabalenka, Kyrgios excited for unique matchup

DUBAI



World number one Aryna Sabalenka and Australian Nick Kyrgios expressed excitement ahead of today's "Battle of the Sexes" exhibition match, an event stirring debate in the tennis world. The contest at Dubai's Coca-Cola Arena pits four-time Grand Slam champion Sabalenka against former world number 13 Kyrgios in a showcase blending competition and entertainment.

Sabalenka said she embraced the unpredictability of the match, describing it as a personal challenge. "This is the feeling you chase in sport," she said, adding that facing Kyrgios, "the guy who's unpredictable and crazy," offers great training and a chance to inspire young girls watching. She emphasized that the event aims to promote tennis and highlight the strength of women's players, not to undermine equality already achieved in the sport.

Kyrgios echoed the sentiment, seeing the event as a platform to promote unity. "There's too much division and not enough teamwork. This match shows we can do incredible things together in sport," he said. While he aims to win, Kyrgios stressed collaboration and entertainment as key aspects of the exhibition.

The match has modified rules—one serve each, smaller court for Sabalenka, and a 10-point tiebreak—enabling her to play aggressively and entertain.

The contest features modified rules, including one serve per player, a slightly smaller court for Sabalenka, and a 10-point tiebreak if needed. Sabalenka said the adjustments will allow her to stay aggressive and use her power and touch to make the match entertaining.

The event recalls the 1973 "Battle of the Sexes" between Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs, though both players noted the historical stakes differ. Sabalenka said the focus now is on showcasing skill, promoting tennis, and encouraging fans to enjoy the spectacle while appreciating the competitive spirit of both men's and women's game.

Jaiswal recalls Kohli's dance after ODI century

VISAKHAPATNAM

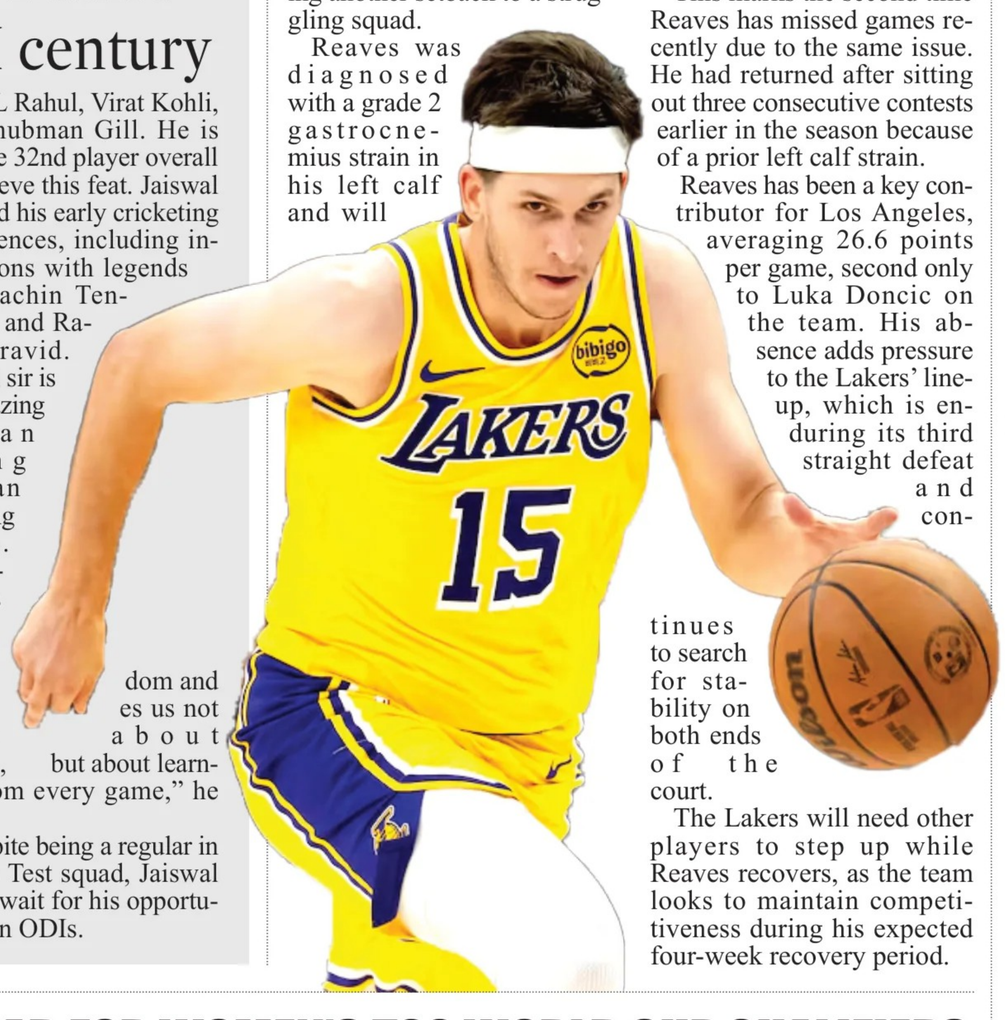
Indian batsman Yashasvi Jaiswal shared a fun behind-the-scenes moment with Virat Kohli after hitting his maiden ODI century earlier this year against South Africa. The southpaw revealed that Kohli sang the Bollywood hit "Lagan Lag Gayi Re" and started dancing to celebrate the milestone.Jaiswal described the interaction as lighthearted and memorable. "His sense of humour is great, and he is very funny. But when he is serious, the entire world knows the level of intensity with which he plays. I really enjoy playing with him," Jaiswal said during an appearance on sports journalist Vimal Kumar's YouTube channel.The century made Jaiswal the sixth Indian to score centuries in all formats of men's cricket, joining an elite group including Suresh Raina, Rohit Sharma, KL Rahul, Virat Kohli, and Shubman Gill. He is also the 32nd player overall to achieve this feat. Jaiswal recalled his early cricketing experiences, including interactions with legends like Sachin Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid. "Rahul sir is an amazing human being and an amazing coach. He always gives us freedom and teaches us not just about cricket, but about learning from every game," he said.

Despite being a regular in India's Test squad, Jaiswal had to wait for his opportunities in ODIs.

Lakers' Reaves out for at least a month

LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles Lakers guard Austin Reaves could be sidelined for at least a month after suffering a strained left calf, the team announced, delivering another setback to a struggling squad.



Reaves was diagnosed with a grade 2 gastrocnemius strain in his left calf and will be re-evaluated in roughly four weeks. The injury forced him to leave the Lakers' 119–96 loss to Houston on Thursday during the second half, a game in which he had scored 12 points.

This marks the second time Reaves has missed games recently due to the same issue. He had returned after sitting out three consecutive contests earlier in the season because of a prior left calf strain.

Reaves has been a key contributor for Los Angeles, averaging 26.6 points per game, second only to Luka Doncic on the team. His absence adds pressure to the Lakers' lineup, which is enduring its third straight defeat and continues to search for stability on both ends of the court.

The Lakers will need other players to step up while Reaves recovers, as the team looks to maintain competitiveness during his expected four-week recovery period.

Empty seats spark anger among Moroccan fans

RABAT

Moroccan football fans have voiced anger and confusion during the ongoing Africa Cup of Nations after noticing large sections of empty seats inside stadiums officially declared sold out.

The frustration was most visible in Rabat, where Morocco's group-stage match against Mali was played at the Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium, which can hold nearly seventy thousand spectators.

Despite tickets being officially sold out, television images and fans outside the venue showed clear gaps in the stands.Morocco and neighboring Algeria were the only teams whose group-stage matches sold out, making the situation even more puzzling for home supporters.

Many fans said they tried to access the official ticketing website early, but were unable to secure seats as pages quickly showed matches as fully booked.

Supporters waiting outside the stadium expressed disappointment, saying they felt locked out of their own national team's matches.

While the official attendance figure for the match was announced as 63,844, the empty seats raised questions about ticket distribution.

Fans and local reports blamed ticket touts, accusing them of buying large numbers of seats and reselling them at hugely inflated prices.

Some supporters claimed tickets originally priced at around fifty euros were being offered on the black market for ten times more.

The situation has sparked calls for better control, fairer access, and stronger action against illegal reselling so genuine fans can fill stadiums and fully support their teams during Africa's biggest football tournament.

Organisers have yet to issue a detailed response, but pressure is growing for transparency before the knockout stages, when demand is expected to rise even further across host cities nationwide and international audiences watching.

Chopra questions KKR's middle-order balance

KOLKATA

Former India opener Aakash Chopra has raised concerns over the batting depth of Kolkata Knight Riders ahead of the IPL 2026 season, despite the franchise receiving praise for its strong bowling unit.

Chopra highlighted the challenges KKR might face in selecting four overseas players, particularly if a keeper-batter opens the innings. "If you make a keeper opener, who bats in the lower order? That is a big question," he said on his YouTube channel, pointing out that Tim Seifert and Finn Allen are the team's new options in this role. He suggested possible combinations, such as pairing Ajinkya Rahane with a keeper opener and slotting Cameron Green at No. 3. However, he felt the middle order beyond that—featuring Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Rinku Singh, Ramandeep Singh, and Tejasvi Singh—looked slightly weak. Chopra proposed alternative setups, like opening with Sunil Narine and Rahane or adjusting the keeper duties to strengthen the lineup, allowing flexibility with players like Anukul Roy or Rovman Powell. Despite the batting questions, Chopra praised KKR's bowling resources, noting they now have a total of 22–23 overs of potent options. He cited Vaibhav Arora, Harshit Rana, Sunil Narine, Varun Chakravarthy, Cameron Green, Matheesha Pathirana, and Mustafizur Rahman as key contributors, calling it a "gun bowling unit."

India target fourth win over Sri Lanka

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A confident Indian women's cricket team will look to seal a fourth straight victory when it faces Sri Lanka in the fourth T20 International on Sunday. Led by Harmanpreet Kaur, India has completely controlled the five match series and currently holds an unassailable 3-0 lead at home.

The hosts have shown clear dominance in all three games so far. India comfortably chased targets every time, finishing matches quickly and calmly. In none of the games did the team bat beyond 14.4 overs, lose more than three wickets, or face a target higher than 129 runs.

Strong opening partnerships, sharp fielding, and disciplined bowling have kept Sri Lanka under constant pressure. Indian bowlers have restricted scoring with tight lines, while batters have played with freedom and confidence. Sri Lanka, on the other hand, has struggled to match India's pace and depth. Frequent wickets, slow scoring, and missed chances in the field have hurt their chances n the series. With two matches still left, India will aim to continue the winning momentum and test bench strength.

IRELAND NAMES SQUAD FOR WOMEN'S T20 WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

DUBLIN

Cricket Ireland has announced its 15-player squad for the ICC Women's T20 World Cup Global Qualifier, scheduled in Kathmandu, Nepal, from January 18 to February 1, 2026. Gaby Lewis will lead the team as captain, with Orla Prendergast serving as her deputy.

The Irish team will depart on January 6 for a six-day preparation camp in Dubai, ahead of their journey to Nepal on January 12. As part of their preparation, the squad will play two warm-up matches against Nepal and Zimbabwe.

The tournament will feature ten teams, including Bangladesh, Ireland, the Netherlands, Namibia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Scotland, Thailand, the USA, and Zimbabwe. Teams are divided into two groups of five. Ireland has been placed in Group A. After the group stage, the top three teams from each group will advance to the Super Six stage, with the top four teams from that stage qualifying for the T20 World Cup.

Graeme West, Director of High Performance, said, "Our recent tour to South Africa highlighted the challenges of international cricket and provided valuable lessons. The upcoming Qualifier will be the stage to put that experience into action." He added that Nepali wickets are typically low and slow, prompting the inclusion of three frontline spinners in the squad. He confirmed that Amy Hunter is expected to fully recover from her recent minor injury.

The 15-player squad includes Gaby Lewis (c), Orla Prendergast (vc), Ava Canning, Christina Coulter Reilly, Alana Dalzell, Laura Delany, Sarah Forbes, Amy Hunter, Arlene Kelly, Aimee Maguire, Jane Maguire, Lara McBride, Cara Murray, Leah Paul, and Rebecca Stokell. Ireland hopes for a strong performance to secure qualification for the T20 World Cup in June 2026.

Karikaada's Musical Adventure Film Creates Nationwide Excitement

Sandalwood is set to welcome a unique cinematic journey with the release of Karikaada, a film prepared in Kannada and ready for premiere in five languages. Promoted as a musical adventure, the movie combines striking visuals, a love story metaphor, and a narrative celebrating the beauty of the land. The story, with hints of a revenge tale, has already generated curiosity among viewers.

Three months ago, the Karikaada title teaser created a stir, and the recently released official teaser has further heightened expectations. Audiences and critics are keeping a close eye on both the performances and technical aspects of the film.

Starring Kadanataraj in the lead, the cast also includes Balrajavadi, Yash Shetty, and Tulu cinema's Nikhitha Shetty as the female lead. Supporting actors include Manju Swami, Govind Gowda, Divakar, comedy star Surya, D. Rakesh Poojari, Vijay Chanduru, Chandraprabha, Karisubbu, Giri, Master Aryan, and Balanati Riddhi. The film is produced under the Riddhi Entertainments banner, guided by Kadanataraj's wife Deepti Damodhar, with Ravikumar S.R. as co-producer.

Directed by Gilli Venkatesh and based on a story by Kadanataraj, the film's music is composed by Atishay Jain and Shashank Sheshagiri, who also provides the background score. Cinematography is by Jeevan Gowda, and editing by Deepak C.S.

The teaser launch revealed several unique elements of the film. Bollywood traders

have expressed interest in a Hindi release, and major brands have partnered with the project, marking a first for a Kannada film. Scheduled for release on February 6 in over 1,200 theaters worldwide, Karikaada is also being prepared for a major rollout in North India.

Ram Charan Surprises Salman Khan On Song Shoot

Tollywood star Ram Charan made a memorable appearance in the song Yentamma from Salman Khan's 2023 film Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan, sharing the frame with Salman and Venkatesh Daggubati. The story was recently recalled by Salman as he celebrated his 60th birthday, with fans and fellow stars across India paying tribute to the Bollywood superstar.

Salman Khan revealed that during the shoot in Hyderabad, Ram Charan casually expressed his desire to join the

song. He said, 'I want to do this. I want to be with you and Venky in the same frame.' I thought he was joking and said we would discuss it the next day, Salman shared.

To everyone's surprise, Charan arrived the following day fully prepared in his costume, showing up early on set. Salman recalled, I said, 'What are you doing here?' He said, 'I want to be here.' I said, 'We love you and want you here. But is it okay for you?' He said yes. That's how he came into the film, and we had a great time shooting. Ram Charan's enthusiasm and preparation led to his seamless integration into the popular track alongside Salman and Venkatesh, making it a memorable moment for the team.

Malavika Mohanan
Shines As Bhairavi In Raja Saab

Actress Malavika Mohanan has unveiled her first look as Bhairavi in the upcoming Telugu horror-comedy The Raja Saab, starring Rebel Star Prabhas and directed by Maruthi. The film is scheduled for release on Sankranti, January 9, 2026, in multiple languages, coinciding with Thalapathy Vijay's Jana Nayagan.

The poster shows Malavika in a black saree, accessorized with a fancy bracelet and a small handbag, lifting her sunglasses with a strong and calm expression. Standing alone in a dark and eerie setting, she gives off a powerful and menacing aura. Fans have described her look as villain vibes, hinting at the intense and mysterious nature of her character. The poster caption reads: BHAIRAVI. Picture Abhi Baki Hai Mere Dost.

Malavika, who is making her Telugu debut with this film, shared insights about balancing multiple projects across different film industries. She praised the creative challenge of portraying unique characters in diverse genres while staying authentic to each role. Her recent work includes the Malayalam film Hridayapoorvam and the Tamil project Sardar 2.

In The Raja Saab, Prabhas plays a young man who inherits a haunted house filled with ghosts and mystical elements, leading to a mix of horror, comedy, romance, and action. The film promises an engaging blend of thrills and laughter, with Malavika's Bhairavi adding a striking presence to the story.

The release of The Raja Saab is highly anticipated, with audiences looking forward to seeing Malavika Mohanan bring her haunting and commanding character to life alongside Prabhas in this multi-genre entertainer.

Drishyam 3 Producer Reveals Details On Akshaye Khanna Exit

The makers of Drishyam 3, starring Ajay Devgn and Tabu, have addressed Akshaye Khanna's unexpected exit from the highly anticipated thriller. Scheduled for release on October 2, 2026, the film notably left Khanna's name out of the credits, sparking widespread speculation about his absence. Producer Kumar Mangat Pathak has now revealed the reasons behind the actor's departure.

According to Pathak, Khanna requested to wear a wig just days before filming was to begin. Since Drishyam 3 is a sequel, the makers felt this would cause continuity issues. Director

Abhishek Pathak explained the concerns, and Khanna initially agreed to drop the demand. However, he later insisted on the wig again and soon after informed the team that he no longer wished to be part of the film. Pathak added that Khanna's recent success with Dhurandhar influenced his decision. Some actors do ensemble films, and after success, they start thinking they are superstars. Success has gone into his head. He told us, 'Dhurandhar is working because of me,' the producer said. He also noted that Khanna had initially loved the Drishyam 3 script, calling it a five hundred crore film, and an agreement with advance payment had already been finalized before the actor backed out, causing major losses for the team.

Wamiqa Gabbi
Says Cinema Embraces Subtle Storytelling Now

Actress Wamiqa Gabbi has reflected on the evolution of cinema in the first quarter of the 21st century, highlighting how storytelling has found more space in contemporary films. According to her, modern cinema has gradually moved toward quieter, nuanced narratives that focus on flawed characters and emotions without needing to be loud.

What really stands out is how much space storytelling has found. The last couple of decades have allowed for quieter narratives, flawed people, and stories that don't need to shout to be heard, Wamiqa said. She added that while technology has helped films reach audiences faster, the most significant change has been the trust audiences now place in subtle, complex storytelling. Audiences today are open to nuance and complexity. Performances can unfold slowly, and stories can linger instead of aiming only for instant reaction, she explained.

Wamiqa debuted as a child in Jab We Met, starring Kareena Kapoor Khan and Shahid Kapoor, and later established herself in Punjabi cinema with hits like Tu Mera 22 Main Tera 22, Nikka Zaildar 2 and 3, and Kali Jotta. She has also appeared in Tamil (Maalai Naerathu Mayakkam) and Malayalam (Godha) films.

She was last seen in Bhool Chuk Maaf, a fantasy romantic comedy with Rajkummar Rao and Seema Pahwa. Upcoming projects include Pati Patni Aur Woh 2, releasing on March 4, 2026, alongside Ayushmaan Khurrana and Sara Ali Khan, and Bhooth Bangla, directed by Priyadarshan, starring Akshay Kumar, Paresh Rawal, Tabu, Rajpal Yadav, and Mithila Palkar, slated for release on April 2, 2026. Other projects include Kuku Ki Kundali, Tiki Taka, and Goodachari 2.

Through her career, Wamiqa Gabbi continues to embrace performances and stories that celebrate subtlety, complexity, and depth in modern cinema.

Bhumi Pednekar
Credits Fashion For Staying True Always

Actress Bhumi Pednekar recently opened up about the special role fashion plays in her life, using social media to share her thoughts with fans. The Dum Laga Ke Haisha star revealed that fashion is more than just style—it is her way of expressing herself and staying grounded amid life's ups and downs.

Sharing an album of her high-fashion moments on Instagram, Bhumi wrote, Fashion has been my quiet rebellion, my armor, my joy. Through love, hate, and every narrative formed around me, it's helped me stay rooted in who I am. She also expressed gratitude toward the designers, stylists, makeup and hair artists, photographers, assistants, and magazine editors who have helped shape her personal style.

Known for sharing glimpses of her personal and professional life with her Instagram followers, Bhumi recently posted photos from a getaway with her family, jokingly mentioning the joy of spending time with loved ones and pizza. No greater joy than spending time with the ones you love and pizza…latergram, she wrote.

On the work front, Bhumi was last seen in the film Mere Husband Ki Biwi, co-starring Arjun Kapoor and Rakul Preet Singh. She also appeared in the OTT series The Royals, portraying Sophia Shekhar, a strong-willed entrepreneur. Directed by Priyanka Ghose and Nupur Asthana, the show features an ensemble cast including Ishaan Khatter, Zeenat Aman, Sakshi Tanwar, Nora Fatehi, Vihaan Samat, Dino Morea, and Milind Soman in pivotal roles.

Through both her fashion choices and career, Bhumi Pednekar continues to inspire fans by staying authentic and embracing her personal style confidently.

Bharatbala's Documentary Celebrates Nagaland's Rich Cultural Heritage

Filmmaker Bharatbala, known for Vande Mataram and Maryan, has unveiled a new documentary celebrating the heritage of Nagaland. Titled Kunemechi – A Home Carved in Ancestry, the film focuses on a single Naga family that preserves the traditional art of hand-carved wooden homes. The documentary was officially launched by music composer AR Rahman, a frequent collaborator of the director.

Bharatbala shared that the documentary took nearly two months to shoot and involved extensive research and on-ground work. The challenge was to ensure the film feels authentic — not like an outsider's gaze. We wanted it to feel as if the community itself made the film, he said. The filmmaker emphasized the importance of representing the culture faithfully while showcasing the artistry and lifestyle of the Naga people.

The project is part of Bharatbala's broader vision, Virtual Bharat, aimed at creating 1,000 stories from across India to highlight the country's rich heritage and diversity. India is rich in heritage and diversity. How does a child in Tamil Nadu know how a Naga family lives, celebrates, and preserves culture? This film is about connecting India to Indians, he added.

AR Rahman, who has always supported Bharatbala's meaningful and experimental work, launched the film in Kohima while engaging musically with local communities to celebrate their culture and pride. His collaboration, the filmmaker said, adds a unique musical perspective to the documentary, complementing its visual storytelling.

Kunemechi – A Home Carved in Ancestry promises to be a visually immersive and culturally rich journey into the traditions of Nagaland, reflecting both the family's dedication and Bharatbala's commitment to capturing India's diverse heritage.

City Hilights (English Daily) published by P. Sunil Kumar (Publisher) on behalf of Immaculate Broadcasting Consortium World News (P) Ltd., No. 18, JRV Court, Queens's Road, Bengaluru – 560001 and printed at Manipal Media Network Limited Opp. Govt School, Kempalinganahalli, Near Kunigal Cross, Nelamangala TQ, Bangalore Rural Dist. -562123, Printed at No-7/2 plot no.CA-3/1,28(p)&29(p) Kapanoor 2nd Stage Industrial Area Kapnoor Village Kalaburagi -585104. Printed at S. J. R. V. Printers, No. 208 Plot No. B-019 KSSIDC Industrial Area, Irfan Ahamed Khan Pathan, 4th Main Road Gamanagatti, Hubballi-Dharwad – 580025. and Elegant Offset Printers Pvt. Ltd. No. 5-61/1, Shed No. M-6, Yeyyadi Industrial Estate, Yeyyadi, Mangalore - 575 008. (RNI No: KARENG / 2015 / 63243), Regd. No. BGGPO-2581/2017-2019 Posted at Bengaluru PSO-560026 Email - cityhilights.news@gmail.com Phone: 080-41209042. Copyright. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is prohibited.